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“Sommerfreuden“ (“Summer Pleasures”) at the Vienna Ringturm

On its 60th birthday, the Ringturm is attracting the attention of the international art scene. For the eighth time, Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein will wrap the Ringturm – this year with the work “Sommerfreuden“ (“Summer Pleasures”) by Croatian artist Tanja Deman.

Today, work is set to start on the façade of the Ringturm. This summer, the building will once again make its mark on the city’s appearance with a supersized art installation. Wrapping the Ringturm has already become a tradition, and this year, as an expression of the cross-border intercultural dialogue of Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein, the wrapping of the tower will build a strong connection with Croatia. Austria and Croatia are bound by many years of shared history, and Croatia’s accession to the EU has made this close relationship even more intense. *“This year, with Tanja Deman, the Croatian artist who is transforming the Ringturm building with her work ‘Sommerfreuden’ (‘Summer Pleasures’), we are giving Vienna an installation reflecting a kind of nostalgia. This work represents the essential human yearning for sunshine and joie de vivre. The motif acts as a kind of window – one glance is enough to open up a new perspective on urban living”*, according to Dr Günter Geyer, Chairman of the Managing Board of the Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein.

“Sommerfreuden“ (“Summer Pleasures”)

In “Sommerfreuden”, Tanja Deman opens up the Viennese urban landscape and presents a utopia of summer refreshment and relaxation. *“Fascinated and simultaneously inspired by the diverse waterscapes of Vienna, ‘Sommerfreuden’ creates a fluent and smooth passage between two worlds, constructed landscape and natural”*, says Deman of her work. The picture is an amalgam of very different puzzle pieces carefully combined to create a balanced composition. Water and air – two elements humans could not live without – dominate the work. The first glance plunges the spectator into the refreshing water of a swimming pool teeming with other people. The second glance brings forth film sequences, like our own personal memories of a summer’s day, which gradually assemble to form a consistent ensemble.

At the same time, the work meets the demand for a new perspective, for distance from the protagonists – both in terms of space and time – because Deman’s piece is directly linked to the real world around it and ‘folds’ space and time to form a unique image-space. The artist focuses on nature as shaped by humans, and the Ringturm itself becomes part of this artificial landscape. *“‘Sommerfreuden’ illustrates the city dwellers’ longing for relaxation, rest and pleasure. An artificial nature created by humans acts as a frame, combined with unspoilt nature in the distance”*, Deman explains. For example, the ‘bathing landscape’ in the foreground of the image is directly connected to the work’s own urban context, the Donaukanal (Danube Canal). Tanja Deman turns the Donaukanal – a popular summertime meeting point for the locals, as well as for tourists – into a common perspective: instead of the Ringturm building we can see the sea, horizon and some offshore islands. Even the sky in the image indicates that the work portrays an artificial reality; the lines across the blue sky give it the air of an old photocopy. Appearances are deceptive, however, because the image does not show a real scene; the way it unfolds makes it clear that the portrayed scene has never taken place this way.

WIENER STÄDTISCHE WECHSELSEITIGER VERSICHERUNGSVEREIN, MAIN SHAREHOLDER OF VIENNA INSURANCE GROUP

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In 2015, Tanja Deman's work marks a turning point in the artistic wrapping of the Ringturm: in the past, only paintings were used. This year's "Sommerfreuden" marks a shift towards new media. Work on the Ringturm façade will continue until mid-June, until a total of 30 printed pieces of fabric, each about three metres wide and up to 63 metres long, are installed. The 4,000 sqm art piece will be on display from mid-June until September.

The artist

Visual artist Tanja Deman was born in the Croatian seaport of Split in 1982; today she lives and works in Zagreb. She holds Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Fine Arts (BFA, MFA) from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. The 33-year-old artist has participated in many international artistic programmes and has exhibited her work on numerous homeland and international art exhibitions. In Austria, for example, she was artist-in-residence programme at KulturKontakt cultural centre in Vienna and is currently artist-in-residence at the Atelierhaus Salzamt in Linz. Deman works in photography and film. Reflecting on modern architectural history and the landscape, she addresses the sociology of space and studies the socio-political dynamics of the human made environment. Numerous prizes and awards underscore her success. Deman's works are to be found in several public collections and many private collections worldwide.

Architecture in the Ringturm

To mark this year's wrapping of the Ringturm, the exhibition "Croatian Islands – Construction Culture over the Centuries" is on display between 22 June and 23 October at the Vienna Ringturm. Croatia's unique island world, with around 1,200 islands (only 66 of which are inhabited), and its rich architectural heritage are in the focus of Adolph Stiller's and Lukas Skanski's exhibition. The Dalmatian islands and their remarkable hotel buildings are portrayed in the exhibition, as well as the great historic structures built by the Romans and Venetians which define the coastline.

The Ringturm at 60

In 2015, the Ringturm celebrates its 60th anniversary: on 14 June 1955, the Ringturm, Vienna's first office block, was ceremonially inaugurated. At that time, it was a symbol of freedom, modernity and the reconstruction of Austria; today, the Ringturm has become a space for exchange, communication and the cross-border intercultural dialogue of Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein. Since 2006, the Ringturm itself has become an artwork; a 'wrapped' tower. After four successful works by Austrian artists, since 2012, artists from Austria's neighbouring countries have also been invited to design the Ringturm's wrapping.

Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein is the principal shareholder of Vienna Insurance Group (VIG) and provides assistance to VIG in cultural and social matters. Great importance is placed on cross-border cultural exchanges, thus creating open spaces for cultural development. Through co-operation and initiatives, Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein provides specifically targeted support for socially active organisations, especially in countries in Central and Eastern Europe where VIG has a presence. Furthermore, as the principal shareholder, Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein also deals with strategic policy issues of the Group.

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Caption:

Wrapped Ringturm, summer 2015, Tanja Deman – "Sommerfreuden" ("Summer Pleasures")
Photograph/rendering: © Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein/Tanja Deman