

KUNST IS SUPER

An event held by the Swiss artist Enrico Centonze at Art Basel

On the 9th of June at the Basel convention centre, Enrico Centonze will be hanging a huge banner that says KUNST IST SUPER (“art is super”) in golden lettering.

The event will take place at 11 o'clock when the 40th ART Basel opens its doors.

Quite a few things have changed ever since the economic crisis was heralded in back in September 2008. There are no more limousines driving around in Iceland, the Chinese are no longer buying art, auction catalogues are getting thinner and thinner, sponsors like UBS have cut back their funding for cultural projects, artists have been left alone in their studios and art show organisers are running to galleries to safeguard their existence.

Art of the Super(re)lative!

The financial crisis has hit the art market hard, even when some prefer to ignore this fact.

With the trade fairs, commercial aspects have come to the fore. Ever since the uninterrupted growth of the art market since the 80's, art has become more and more of a venturesome investment: the quality of artwork was determined by its value.

Duchamp's instructions were compiled in precisely this context: “If you take an object and change its aura by displaying it in a museum, then it becomes art. We took art and changed its aura by hanging it in an exhibition hall. We turned works of art into merchandise.” And this is how the art market slowly made itself reliant upon the financial system.

At the same time, art became fashion. At the last Biennale in Venice, high fashion magazines like Vogue suddenly had reporters on location. Being present at art events became extremely popular on account of the hysterical party atmosphere.

Crisis or Jubilation?

On opening day at Art Basel, right in between the VIP audience and rooftop terrace “City Beach”, Enrico Centonze will be hanging his banner with its golden lettering KUNST IST SUPER. Art Basel is the ideal location for this happening, as the tension and ambivalence between art and the art market is exhibited here the best. At Art Basel, the mother of all art shows, everybody is curious to see for themselves how hard the financial crisis has really hit the art market. At the same time and despite the collapse in sales at auctions, trade shows and galleries, a sense of hope is conveyed with the argument that the venturers are out of the way now, and the true lovers of art have returned in their place. In other words, the art market crisis can be seen as a catastrophe or as art's saving grace. So is there new hope of more successful sales, more art parties?

Or does the problem lie somewhere else entirely? Is it ultimately a matter of art at all, or a party? Is art the same as fashion? With his straightforward event, Enrico Centonze wants to trigger a discussion about the value and status of art.

Enrico Centonze is a young artist from Switzerland. He has been working in open public spaces since 2005.

With his happenings, the artist wants to draw attention to one current crisis situation at a time in order to arouse reactions and awaken people's consciousness for public affairs. Back in October 2008 already, Centonze's event “Everybody Wants Gold – Rettung in Sicht” was a reaction to the announcement of the German federal government's bail-out package of 500 billion euros for German banks. He installed 500

head-high flags made of golden aluminium rescue blankets in front of the Reichstag in Berlin – one for every billion. The event is documented at <http://www.enrico111.com/page29/page12/page12.html>.

Together with his team, Centonze takes on the role of an intermediary during the happening, interviewing and filming citizens' interaction with his art installation, the catalyst of this event. Following Zurich, London, Prague and Berlin, Basel will now become his new field of action.

Contact, further information, photos and video material:

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Documentation of the art event at Art Basel on the 9th of June 2009 can be found at www.kunstistsuper.com.

Enrico Centonze: "Kunst ist super", Art Basel, 9 June 2009, 11:00