

## **,The Artist's Voice'**

### **A symposium at the Academy of Arts, Berlin from Oct 11 to 13 2001**

The 3-day symposium was a co-operation between the International Association of Art (IGBK), the Academy of Arts and the Institute for Foreign Relations. Artists from China, Japan and South Africa were invited to discuss their views with artists who live in Germany but have long term experiences with living and working abroad. The *Kulturstiftung der Länder* acknowledged the importance of such a meeting and granted financial support.

The geo-political situation after the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 had a direct effect on the meeting as the invited artists from Pakistan and India could - for various reasons - not travel to Germany.

In the contemporary context of globalisation it is without doubt necessary to maintain a cultural dialogue (obviously not only among artists). There are not many opportunities for artists to discuss the working conditions within and outside the art market, the differences of producing art in various places, the impact the centralisation of the art market has and the possibilities of international networks. These discussions are rare as most artists work on their own and under the pressure put on by the hectic international exhibition market.

Most contributions were very informative but also general aspects of artistic creation lead to controversial discussions. Beate Terfloth, who lived in Pakistan for a long time, took over the panel that had been planned with the artists from Pakistan. She analysed the various art forms (for instance graphic prints and miniature paintings) in a social and historical context.

Further participants were the Chinese curator Hou Hanru from Paris and the director of museum kunst palast Düsseldorf, Jean-Hubert Martin. Martin's contribution about transforming religious cult objects into the context of art was discussed at length. The question arose whether art should be taken out of its original context at all.

Svea Josephy's presentations also lead to a lively discussion on how far artistic freedom can stretch (in her work she manipulates documentary photographs.) and Alfonso Hüppi, who founded an artist residence in Namibia was questioned about the traces of the colonial past and whether artists develop the necessary sensitivity towards it.

Another question was in which way artists' and curators' views differ in this aspect. On the panel on China the participants discussed the discrepancy between the big mega polis and the rest of the country (in China 90% of the artists come from the big cities) and in how far Chinese artists adapt to 'Western' standards. Artists resident in Germany reported how a foreign country became their second artistic home and how this influences their work.

All in all the symposium was a rare but intense encounter of artists. In the end everyone agreed that it would be great, if such encounter could be repeated in another country.

(Shortened version of a text by the project manager Andreas Schmid)