

# L'AUTRE ALLEMAGNE HORS LES MURS

19.20 ET 21 JAN

## German media responses to the exhibit

### Finally, Provocation Is Allowed

*They are about the same age as the Wall. Young artists from the GDR. Their art transcends borders. Gaudy, provocative, dark and often thought-provoking.*

“In the GDR, you can’t perish as an artist.” Christoph Tannert, the thirty-five-year-old East Berlin art critic and East German partner in organizing the Paris happening, knows the living conditions of the young artists. Every art academy student becomes a candidate for the state’s Association for Visual Artists. Out of the monthly stipend of 400 East Marks you could easily pay the 25-mark rent. Until now, the Association was rather like an “overprotective mother,” for the life of an artist, that could nurture, arrange for success, punish and reject you. “Most artists,” says Tannert, “were nearly muzzled by this support.” Those who were actually silenced did not come to Paris.

—Christina Bylow, *Elle*, 4/1990

### Neither for It, Nor against It

*GDR artists in Paris: A Mega-Event with Shortcomings*

During the three days of the planned mega-event, which was almost ignored by the French press, there was not only the chance to see art objects and artists; the really considerable number of visitors also had a chance to listen to experts discuss the political and social underpinnings of the event. Several prominent guests were invited to the debate. [. . .] Only a few of the participants were able to focus on the subject-matter so as to share new and interesting views with the audience. Peter Schneider (FRG), Helga Schubert and Durs Grünbein (both GDR), Henri Cueco, Alain Jouffroy and Michel Surya (France), as well as Peter Lengyel from Hungary unfortunately got lost in this mega-event that would certainly have been more effective if the organizers had set to work with less ambition and more modesty.

—Werner Söllner, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1/30/1990

### Lying in Wait Behind the Wall

*The GDR Scene on the go. 200 artists show their work at Paris' La Villette*

The French were generous with respect to financing the three-day spectacle. Private sponsors contributed two million Francs and the French Ministry of Culture chipped in one million. [. . .] The entire undertaking must have seemed like a coup d'état to representatives of the GDR. [. . .] When, last week, the East German Embassy in Paris inquired at

La Villette what had been planned for its minister, they were coolly informed that the minister was welcome to come as a private individual, but there would be no official invitation. [. . .] Tannert had already formulated his idea for an exhibition of artists in all media and from all parts of the GDR last September, at a meeting of one hundred intellectuals from East and West Europe in the French city of Blois, in which Madame Mitterand and Jack Lang also participated. [. . .] Maurice Najman, who has focused almost exclusively on Eastern Europe since the early 1980s and has had good contacts to the *Neues Forum* since 1984, had similar ideas. Tannert and Najman got together with the help of the French Ministry of Culture. On December 20, they met at the French Cultural Institute in East Berlin to explain the project to the 200 selected artists. [. . .] The Commando-Exhibition, as Najman likes to call the festival, was pulled together in eight weeks.

—Thomas Eckert, *Tagesspiegel*, 1/28/1990

### **Echo Effects**

*On GDR art in Paris*

Pluralism begins with the “other” Other. Even if the improvised mega-exhibit of 200 GDR artists, which took place last weekend in the Great Hall of Paris’ La Villette, had no other effect, this insight would remain. [. . .] Many French people saw the exhibition as an opportunity to concretely experience the new, multidimensional image of Germany. [. . .] [But for many of them] it was not really clear what constituted the otherness of this “other” Germany. [. . .] East German artists will no longer have to fear being misunderstood once similarities and differences between East and West Germans can appear beside one another without bias abroad . . . for which the event at La Villette seems like much-needed practice.

—Josef Hanimann, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1/26/1990

### **Fast Forward**

*200 GDR artists met in Paris for a cultural spectacle*

It was an exciting weekend in northern Paris, . . . with 200 artists from the formerly walled part of Germany and many works that had never been shown in public, especially not in the West. Works that, until now, could never be evaluated according to outside criteria and that have, in their great variety, only one thing in common: they were forbidden. [. . .] Small groups of mostly young people from France and Germany, East and West, translated and conversed in front of pictures and sculptures. . . . The works, like the artists’ opinions about the future, are multilayered, as yet un-worked out or sometimes sophisticated. While some warn about the sellout of the GDR, others want to exhibit in West Germany and prove themselves in international terms.

—Sylvie Wickert, *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*

### **Strident Anti-Authoritarian Protest against Injustice**

*200 young GDR artists were guests in Paris*

Participating artists hurled at visitors from the French capital a concentrated load of all the depression that had accumulated from the most varied past experiences, and

in sometimes truly idiosyncratic projects. Not everyone appreciated it. Too much raw violence, too much undifferentiated rage, and anyway they have already had this kind of strident protest in France and it's no longer in fashion.

—*Neue Zeit*, 1/24/1990

### **Dictatorship Damage**

*A bloody encounter with GDR underground art*

GDR anti-art, as seen in Paris, functions at the moment as social therapy. [. . .] Talk of “dictatorship damage” made the rounds in Paris. Once it has run its course, there won't be much left that's specific to the GDR. The charisma of this oppositional art is history, just like the edifice in whose shadow it grew. Eventually it will become clear that there is neither West-art, nor East-art—but rather better or worse artists.

—Peter Schneider, *TAZ*, 1/23/1990

### **On the Effort to Make Oneself Understood**

*First impressions of the encounter with GDR art in Paris*

Translating the rubric under which over 200 GDR artists introduced themselves and their work in the Great Hall of Paris' La Villette culture park already presents difficulties: the other Germany . . . outside the walls? . . . across the walls? . . . without walls? No variant is just right. [. . .] Most of the artworks were created, however, in a time in which we were told that the Wall would still be standing in 50 or 100 years. [. . .] For most of the GDR artists, the displays, concerts, dance and theater performances, readings and much more represented the first chance to present themselves in the West. And, conversely, for the Parisians it was the first chance to discover the creativity that developed and asserted itself in the GDR—despite the Wall and on the margins of official cultural policies determined by ideological dogma. And not at all solely, or even mainly in the “underground,” as the media here often represent it.

—Dr. Claus Dümde, *Neues Deutschland*, 1/22/1990

### **A GDR Festival Ended in Paris**

Under the scrutiny of the international and French press, as well as exceptional crowds, the largest multi-genre art festival in the history of GDR art came to a close at the Great Hall of Paris' La Villette. Tens of thousands had direct contact with GDR artists and their works. [. . .] A high point for visiting East German artists and journalists was a reception on Saturday at the Elysée Palace hosted by French President François Mitterrand, who made a point of being introduced to and greeting each one individually.

—*Neue Zeit*, 1/22/1990

### **The Other Germany in Paris**

Of particular interest are the contributions of the participating photographers and filmmakers. With their works, many of them documented what was taking place around them at the time of the big demonstrations: images that no newspaper or television station has yet shown.

—*Cash*, 1/19/1990