

Josef Dabernig Rock the Void

Museum moderner Kunst
Stiftung Ludwig Wien
Museumsplatz 1 | 1070 Wien

Exhibition dates
June 6 to September 14, 2014

Press conference
June 5, 2014, 10 am

Opening
June 5, 2014, 7 pm



Josef Dabernig
Sportplatzpanorama 12 in Kosovo
(6-teilig/in six parts), 2012
SW-Print (Detail)
Dimensionen variabel / dimensions
variable
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A love of order and minimalism, rationalistic obsession, and a drive toward planned structures all seem to determine the scenery chosen by artist and filmmaker Josef Dabernig (born 1956 in Kötschach-Mauthen) for his first comprehensive retrospective exhibition in a museum. The ostentatious tidiness of this show is, however, again and again unsettled by many kinds of subtle irritation and anomaly. This is a form of systems-immanent entropy, presented with a good deal of conceptual humor, that itself becomes the subject of the exhibition. One key feature of *Rock the Void* is the grid pattern, as seen in the form of the mountings on the gallery walls, a row of right-angled showcases, and a series of cubic inserts. For this personal exhibition at mumok, the Austrian artist has designed an architecture that extends over three exhibition levels and by means of which he can place the different blocks of his work in relation to each other. These works include the early sculptures, conceptual lists and text works, mathematically structured aluminum grids, as well as photographic panoramas of soccer stadiums, and Dabernig's film works. We are showing both his new film *River Plate* (2013) and *Hypercrisis* (2011), which was nominated for the European Film Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 2011. The show also presents Dabernig's first film *Wisla* (1996), which gained wide international recognition.

A Cube in a Cube in Cube

In 1977, aged 21, Dabernig copied out a text book on the correct "maintenance" of the digestive tract, working by hand and word for word: Franz X. Mayr, *Schönheit und Verdauung oder die Verjüngung des Menschen durch sachgemäße Wartung des Darms*, (Beauty and Digestion or Growing Younger by Correctly Maintaining the Digestive Tract, 1920). Using a similar systematic approach and formal severity, Dabernig now presents his oeuvre at mumok. Each level contains one of his aluminum grids, made between 1989 and 1996, using a montage system that derives from the construction of suspended facades in the building sector, and also exhibition showcases that are systematically placed in the gallery space. The various display forms used to present Dabernig's ideas, photographs, and texts, are all arranged serially, and so they add a specific rhythm to the gallery spaces. The artist also presents series of cubes of differing shapes, which serve as projection and presentation spaces. In each exhibition level, three white cubes of different sizes are placed opposite three more white cubes of the same sizes. Inside these, Dabernig's films are projected, and slide shows, lists, tickets, copied texts, or early sculptures are shown.

Although the whole arrangement suggests systematic clarity and logical order, this is deliberately countered. From level to level subtle shifts can be seen. These may confuse the visitor, making the promises of objectivity and rational order seem implausible.

The orders of space, architecture, and social systems are recurring themes in

Dabernig's artistic works. With his white cubes in the white cube of the museum, he questions the spatial and ideological ordering systems of mumok itself. In a similar way, his aluminum grids also referred to the order of the buildings to which he attached them. He first affixed the grid *o.T.* (1995) in the historicist Salle de Bal of the French Cultural Institute in Vienna. Then it became a temporary artistic intervention in the Austrian Federal Chancellery. Now it is in the white halls of mumok, where it points at the basic premises of the white cube—with the appertaining notions of artistic autonomy, neutrality, and timelessness.

Gaps, Omissions, and Empty Moments rather than a Standard Retrospective

Dabernig directly confronts the standard retrospective format with gaps, omissions, and empty moments. Taking into account the various times and contents in which his work in different genres was created, the artist takes viewers on a tour through the media of film, photo, text, object, and architecture.

The exhibition showcases present Dabernig's "control lists," made up to the mid-1990s, which document a life with and in the system, rejection of excess, and the artist's personal fetish: soccer. He notes down his daily consumption of cigarettes—never more than four per day. The lists include meticulously tidy entries on Dabernig's use of gas, and the gas stations that he used for his Fiat, Lancia, or Alfa "divas." The lists also include transcripts of all the tickets to soccer matches the artist watched.

Since 1989 Dabernig has made photograph panoramas of soccer pitches on many of his travels—including fields in Cairo, Kraków, Prishtina, Gjumri, Vilnius, and Santiago de Chile. With a few exceptions, all these photos follow the same scheme. Dabernig stands on the middle line of the field, and takes three pictures looking left and three looking right, so as to get a 180° view. Then he turns around and photographs the other half of the pitch in exactly the same way.

The cubes inserted into the exhibition galleries include nine of the thirteen films Dabernig has made since the 1990s. In these, the artist includes a good deal of conceptual humor. He shows himself behind his grids, as a soccer trainer next to the pitch (*Wisla*, 1996), as a semi-uniformed telephone technician (*Timau*, 1998), as a chef seen cleaning compulsively in an empty Polish railroad restaurant car (*WARS*, 2001), or as a summer holidaymaker in *Hotel Roccalba* (2008). The films seem to show systematic and goal-oriented action, but this always becomes absurd. Carefully planned and conducted actions always seem to lead to nothing. This is a nothingness—a void—that Josef Dabernig again and again emphasizes and ultimately turns into its very opposite. Thus: *Josef Dabernig. Rock the Void*.

Curated by Matthias Michalka and Susanne Neuburger

With thanks to the exhibition's sponsor, Vorwerk, as well as the media partners Der Standard, Wien live and Ö1.

Short Biography Josef Dabernig

1956 born in Kötschach-Mauthen, Carinthia

1975–1983 studies at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna

Lives in Vienna

Solo exhibitions (selection from the last five years)

Josef Dabernig. 14 Films, MOCÁK Museum of Contemporary Art, Kraków (2013); *Josef Dabernig, Panorama*, Kunsthaus Graz and Neue Galerie Graz (2013); *Filip Cenek & Josef Dabernig: poetry in stadiums*, Fotograf Gallery, Prague (with Filip Cenek, 2012); *Josef Dabernig. Bad script for a retrospective*, P74 Center und Gallery, Ljubljana (2011); *On Discipline*, Wilfried Lentz Gallery, Rotterdam (2011); *Sports grounds and structural approach*, Galerie Andreas Huber, Vienna (2011); *Josef Dabernig. Excursus on Fitness*, MAK, Vienna (2010), *Spielregeln*, Kunstraum Lakeside, Klagenfurt (with Deimantas Narkevičius, 2008)

Exhibition participations (selection)

Manifesta 10, St. Petersburg (2014), 9. Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju (2012); 50th and 49th Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2003 und 2001); Manifesta 3, Ljubljana (2000)

Film festivals (selection): Venice Film Festival (2011); Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata (2011, 2007); International Film Festival Rotterdam (2011, 2000); London Film Festival (2009); Toronto International Film Festival (2009, 2006); Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen (2014, 2009, 2006); Festival del film Locarno (2008, 2002); Melbourne International Film Festival (2001)

Fact-Sheet
Josef Dabernig
Rock the Void

Exhibition dates	June 6 to September 14, 2014
Opening	June 5, 2014, 7 pm
Press conference	June 4, 2014, 10 am
Exhibition venue	mumok MuseumsQuartier, Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien Levels 0, 2, 3
Curators	Matthias Michalka, Susanne Neuburger
Exhibition production	Sybille Kulterer
Accompanying books	<p>Volume 1: <i>Josef Dabernig</i>, edited by Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien. German, softcover, 210 x 297 mm, 256 pages, numerous b/w-illustrations Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, ISBN: 978-3-902947-11-6</p> <p>Volume 2: <i>Josef Dabernig. Rock the Void</i>, edited by Matthias Michalka and Susanne Neuburger, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien. With a preface by Karola Kraus and texts by Ekaterina Degot, Matthias Michalka, Susanne Neuburger, Georg Schöllhammer German/English, softcover, 148 x 201 mm, app. 176 pages, app. 16 colored illustrations, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, ISBN: 978-3-902947-12-3</p>
Opening hours	Monday: 2–7 pm Tuesday to Sunday: 10 am–7 pm Thursday: 10 am–9 pm
Entrance	Normal € 10 Concessions € 8 or € 7
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