

Kunsthalle Lissabon (PORTUGAL)



The Kunsthalle Lissabon is a contemporary art institution that carries out its activities mostly, but not exclusively, within the cultural dynamics of Lisbon. Indeed, and in spite of having a German name, the Kunsthalle Lissabon is not based on a German-speaking country; its working structure, logistics, staff, financial resources, etc., would hardly ever fulfil the expectations of a conventional, modern-day Kunsthalle. From this point of view, and regardless of any arguments to the contrary, the Kunsthalle Lissabon is a hoax.

However, the simple assumption of the Kunsthalle Lissabon as a hoax is in itself a hoax. This notion of a fake hoax intends to convey not only how impossible it is to establish and maintain a (strictly objective and critical) position that is outside of institutional dynamics, but also the desire to simultaneously inhabit and question from the inside these same conditions, consciously accepting every contradiction that decision implies. Our wish, thus, is to position the Kunsthalle Lissabon as an intentional alternative to traditional institutional models and, in the process, expand the general view of what constitutes an institution. To come across as maladjusted to a context of neo-liberal conformity is an identity we intend to develop as a working mode. From that point of view, the Kunsthalle Lissabon is anything but an hoax.

Thus, taking as their starting-point the historical notion of that which constitutes, not only the traditional Kunsthalle, but a whole series of spaces and platforms affiliated to the same kind of institutional typology, though without adopting that nomenclature and placing ourselves within an increasingly precarious current context, visible in the disaggregation of the historically bourgeois public sphere, which legitimised institutional actions, but also in the severity of the present global economic crisis, the actions of Kunsthalle Lissabon can be defined via three main axis:

- An ideological proximity, resulting from a very personal viewpoint, to what has been defined as institutional critique and also to the later concept of new institutionalism, recently developed in small-to-medium European contemporary art institutions.
- A DIY ethics and aesthetics, caused by the current economic climate and that, in spite of seriously troubling the development and consequent realisation of a simple curatorial program, allows for fluidity, agility and speed of action and, most of all, for autonomy and independence from a more commercial approach, typical of a markedly traditional system, focused on the production and distribution of consumer objects and rituals.
- A practice of close collaboration with the artists, allowing not only for the development of projects that address the curatorial concerns from which the invitations made to the artists emerged, but that also, and particularly, fulfil the artists' wishes and expectations regarding the nature of that collaboration.

The opening cycle, *Performing the Institution(al)* has thus marked the Kunsthalle Lissabon's first year of activity. It is also, and most of all, a token of a wish for self-reflexivity, for thinking about the existing conditions for the development and perception of a so-called institutional practice. During this first year, we have often wondered how long it will take for an institution to be recognised as such. A year, a decade? We have no answer, and, indeed, we believe that the question is not very important. The Kunsthalle Lissabon may expand itself, change its form, change its location... or probably disappear. All this is irrelevant. The Kunsthalle Lissabon is not a curatorial space, project or cycle; it is a concept, an idea, a point of view. And, being a point of view, it is the form through, and from, which we want to think and act upon our surroundings.