

The Middle in Nowhere

The Middle in Nowhere is the title of the international open Art in the Underground competition on Berlin's Underground network in 2016 and 2017. Artworks will be realised around stations on the U5 and U55 lines between Central Station and Cottbusser Platz on the Hellersdorf housing estate in the outskirts. They ask questions spatially, socially and politically about how decisions are made in the 'centre' that have an effect 'in the sticks'.

The U5 connects two major infrastructure projects: the U55 extension in the centre and the urban redevelopment »International Garden Exhibition Berlin 2017 (IGA Berlin 2017)« in Hellersdorf. In 2017 the U5 will transport 2,4 Million visitors to the IGA. Both projects have big effects on their surroundings and are flanked by residents trying to protect green spaces from development.

Most of the artworks will be realised near two locations run by the curatorial team in Hellersdorf - station urbaner kulturen, Art in the Underground's project space since 2014 and »Place Internationale«, green open land between the U5 and a refugee home. The fascist NPD party instrumentalises the neighbourhood for their racist campaign against the home.

The surrounding consists of a.o. 'Plattenbau', a youth club and new family homes. It was planned during East German times as a Garden City. The open land is overgrown and is crossed by informal paths. In geographical and temporal proximity to the »International Garden Exhibition Berlin 2017 (IGA Berlin 2017)«, »The Middle in Nowhere« will investigate the terms 'International', 'Garden' and 'Exhibition' here. The realisation of process-based artworks and a 'garden without borders' will seek to support forms of local appropriation and direct communication.

The open land will be named »Place Internationale«. This reference to the artist Gustav Courbet's democratic action in 1871 in Paris will be marked on the open land by an artistic reconstruction of his toppling of Napoleon's victory column. Courbet and the Communards were critical of Napoleon and organised a democratic vote on toppling the column, renaming the square »Place Internationale«. Paris underwent a Revolution of the City.

The reconstruction of the column by the curatorial team will provide a location for collaborations with local partners. Workshops with young people will explore the effects of political symbols. The column will be erected and toppled at events during »The Middle in Nowhere«.

Project group Art in the Underground (2016/17)

See also: Publication »Was ist draußen?/What is outside?«, 2015. By Jochen Becker, Anna-Maria Gogonjan, Eva Hertzsch, Uwe Jonas, Folke Köbberling, Andromachi Marinou-Strohm, Dejan Markovic, Adam Page, Birgit Schlieps. Published by nGbK, Berlin