

ARTISTS AND THEIR WORKS IN PARLIAMENTARY
BUILDINGS OF THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENS LIEBCHEN

Since the mid-1990s the Art Advisory Committee of the German Bundestag has devised and implemented a scheme for site-specific works of art to be installed in the Reichstag and other parliamentary buildings in Berlin. Artists from Germany and abroad have been invited to submit designs or competition entries. From the outset Jens Liebchen (born 1970 in Bonn) has used his camera to record the results. Parallel to the creation and installation of the works of art he has thus been engaged in his own artistic project. He has photographed all the artists – who include Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, Jenny Holzer, Georg Baselitz (see front cover), Grisha Bruskin (inside cover), Neo Rauch, Jörg Herold and Franka Hörnschemeyer – in the parliamentary buildings at the planning stage or during the installation of their works.

Liebchen has produced a remarkable series of artists' portraits. His photographs capture the artistic individuality of each artist, revealing the tension between the works they have created for buildings designed for a political purpose and the imposing architecture of such structures. At the same time, Liebchen's portraits provide a fascinating survey of the current artistic scene, ranging from internationally acclaimed 'stars' to members of the younger generation embarking on their careers.

Liebchen's project is especially significant because it documents and interprets in photographic terms an exceptional moment in German parliamentary history. Never before has Parliament shown such a comprehensive commitment to art

within its own four walls, has it displayed such willingness to embrace the risks attendant on engagement with artistic creativity. And never before have so many important artists entered into a dialogue with the world of everyday politics. In this way, the planning and completion of the parliamentary buildings has opened a new chapter in the frequently problematical history of encounters between art and politics. Liebchen's photographs provide a vivid record of a vibrant creative atmosphere, of the highly charged relationship between the artists and their political surroundings. Some of the artists appear wary, others act unfazed, still others mask their unease by clowning. By capturing such reactions, the photographs offer insights into the artists' mental and aesthetic attitudes and into their view of politics. The images also reveal something of how political representatives see and present themselves and how the artists reflect this in their works. Liebchen's photographs document a fruitful exchange between the very different worlds of art and politics.

The exhibition is open until 14 November 2003 and at the following times: Monday 9 am to 2 pm, Tuesday to Thursday 9 am to 4 pm, Friday 9 am to 1 pm and during the art tours given on Saturdays and Sundays. No advance booking is necessary – just show proof of your identity at the west entrance to Paul-Löbe-Hauses (Konrad-Adenauer-Strasse 1, opposite the Federal Chancellery, the Bundeskanzleramt).

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