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On the art of helping

Dear readers,

One of the questions most commonly asked at STOCKMAR is “What do you need?” This is because we have always served needs and made products for people—not for markets. In recent months, one question has engrossed every one of us and touched every aspect of our lives: What do we really need? The question of what is essential cannot be answered solely from the perspective of our personal requirements. Rather it encompasses our fellow human beings and our shared world, and this is the only perspective from which it can be answered. We need “enough for everyone. But not more.” This is why we have devoted the “insights” and “prospects” sections in this magazine to what the crisis has done to us, what has carried us through it, and what it will take for us to be able to look forward again.

The lockdown has made it clear that we cannot take art and culture for granted as things that will always be there. We sorely miss concerts, exhibitions, readings, encounters with and through art. And it is astonishing to see the ingenuity with which creators of art and culture are seeking solutions that will make their art accessible. However, it is also up to us to consider the situation of freelance artists—often precarious even at the best of times—and to help them through the crisis. Just like the #KunstNothilfe initiative is doing, for example.

The future we were still expecting at the beginning of this year no longer exists. Anxiety about the future is now widespread, particularly among younger people. Wilhelm Ernst Barkhoff’s vision is therefore more valid than ever: “Fear of a future that we’re afraid of can only be overcome by imagining a future that we want.” Our ideas of the future now have to be completely rethought. The task we are now facing is therefore to get creative. What an opportunity. And what a joy!

Kind regards,

Inke Kruse

On the art of creating

The last few months have turned all our lives upside down. The question of sufficiency (i.e. what is enough, what should be considered absolutely essential) and concepts such as systemic importance have suddenly become omnipresent.

Numerous examples taken from art, society and politics have shown that crisis is a prerequisite for change, for transformation. But these examples all belong to the past. What does crisis feel like when it's actually happening? How do we handle it, and what carries us through it? Trust is definitely one thing. So is resilience. And looking forward. Even—or particularly when—we don't know what forward is, or which way it's heading. Another of the most pressing questions in times like these is "What will replace the things that have passed?" Carrying on as before or returning to the previous state of things is less of an option now than ever before. But this is exactly what creates space for the question "What's it all about anyway?" And opens up the opportunity for a radical paradigm change—radical in the original sense of the word, i.e. from the roots.

One of the great lessons to be learned from the coronavirus crisis

is that change has less to do with knowledge and more with desire. We have spent decades discussing how complicated it is to find a way out of the climate crisis. But the last few months have brought us the greatest potential for reducing CO² emissions that we have ever experienced. We have found that we can manage with far fewer essential supplies than we had once thought. We have been rewarded with the return and multiplication of numerous insects and birds. With clean canals in Venice. With dolphins that have swum right up to the Italian coast for the first time in decades. This means we can and may by all means confidently say "no". After all, everyone has the same right of

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access to resources. So the order of the day is “Enough for everyone. But not more.”

The question still remains as to what is carrying us through the crisis. And what we can confidently say “yes” to. We are currently standing on a threshold in many different



PROSPeCTS

respects. On a very small, seasonal scale, we are once again moving from nursery to school. And from school to adult life. The closure of nurseries and schools means that educators, parents and above all children are now having to cope with a whole new set of challenges. And these relate to more than just the question of how educational content can be taught digitally; the biggest challenge was (and still is) how social interaction and community living can function when everyone is far apart.

The results of the studies conducted during the pandemic on fear of the future in children and adolescents cannot be taken seriously enough. Yet we are also standing on the threshold of a future that has to be created afresh. And we are free to do so! For this, we need courage. And we also need to find joy. Joy in being creative, in being considerate, in showing solidarity.

And this solidarity may have been the second biggest miracle to emerge from this crisis. Notes have been attached to trees and noticeboards in apartment buildings as a straightforward way of offering help to people who were particularly at-risk. Going shopping, taking the dog for a walk, running errands. People are seeking solutions and becoming proac-

tive. And the question of systemic importance has also forced us to adopt a whole new perspective. Professions that for decades had been largely ignored and unappreciated by society have suddenly become vitally important. Nurses and people who care for the elderly. Parcel carriers. Supermarket cashiers. Bus drivers.

This solidarity, this feeling of kinship, this attention to the well-being of all are more present than ever before. And interestingly, we have achieved a remarkable state of consensus, for example as to whether we want to protect the climate. So why can't we initiate change, especially considering that it is now more necessary than it has ever been? The coronavirus pandemic has imposed certain constraints, not only on our space but also to some degree on our time. We have to learn a new way of thinking that is rooted in the future. To think as citizens, not as consumers. To root our thinking in a future that doesn't yet exist and has to be shaped. As we move forward, we have to ask questions, be courageous and joyful. And be a model to the generation to whom this future belongs.



On the art of helping



On his website, Igor Levit describes himself with the words “Citizen. European. Pianist.” Yet during the coronavirus crisis, Levit—as a citizen—did more than just play the piano. Although he did that too. With his private concerts on Twitter, he used his art to overcome barriers and penetrate confined spaces during the lockdown. Every evening, he streamed private concerts into thousands of homes. Yet he was not only concerned with forging a connection with the public (although that was also important). He was also drawing attention to the thousands and thousands of creative artists who, unlike himself, were not in the happy position of having sufficient funds to survive the lockdown. For Eric Satie’s *Vexations*, he played the same sequence of notes 840 times over, an undertaking that took almost 16 hours and was intended to draw attention to the precarious situation of other artists.

The #KunstNothilfe initiative aims to provide assistance through non-bureaucratic channels, particularly for the many freelance creators of art and culture who were excluded from the temporary financial aid provided by the government because rent and food were not criteria that would have entitled them to it. An emergency account was set up at the GLS Bank to collect donations for artists whose livelihoods were at-risk. The great thing about this is that the initiative is not called “artists’ aid”, but rather “art aid”, i.e. it refers to what would be lost if the artists were unable to pursue their calling. Their future artwork.

“... besides need, [I] also perceived great imagination and a spirit of improvisation and solidarity. For me, these are the ‘seeds’ that germinate when emergency situations arise, in fact when any kind of change is taking place,” says Tille Barkhoff, eurythmist, creative artist and co-founder of #KunstNothilfe. STOCKMAR was also glad to make a contribution to the future of art and culture.

igor-levit.de

ART & MOre

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EDITORS: Inke Kruse (responsible under press law),
Corinna Maliske

ILLUSTRATIONS: Katharina Hintze

LAYOUT: Sabine Gasser · Gestaltung
www.sabinegasser.de, Hamburg

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