

## **"projekt 15.000.000.000 \ Terminus Station in Bethang"**

*An exhibition by Karsten Neumann,*

*from 8. - 27. July 2011 in the "open public office" of the urban planning center in Nuremberg*

**Introduction: Dr. Claudia Emmert, Erlangen**

Dear ladies and gentlemen, dear Karsten Neumann,

we are in times where the ability to communicate digitally is setting the pace. So, we are zapping daily through more than 100 TV programs, bookmark innumerable websites for our regular check, connect ourselves online with a large community of friends, twitter, send smses and facebook relentlessly. In all areas of life and at any time, we communicate via mobile net or Skype. We casually fly to London or Paris for a day – sometimes, we may travel by train. The clickaty-clack of the laptops and the peeping mobile phones have become a familiar sound on a train ride just as the murmuring roar of the wheels on the rails. One is pasting little antennas on the glass windows, another one is loading the mobile network on the computer, a third is using the online-service of the Deutsche Bahn, a fourth shows perseverance by reanimating the continuously disrupted telephone connections with his phone partner. Don't lose time. Delays are commented with scornful disregard and the rather unrelaxed questions for alternative connections.

"Eins zwei drei im Sauseschritt, es rast die Zeit, wir rasen mit" – is a German proverb created by the German author and humorist Wilhelm Busch and means: Time is running with high speed and we keep chasing after it.

In the midst of all this highly busy contemporary turmoil, Karsten Neumann comes up with the idea to suggest a terminus station in Bethang – this artistic fusion of a Franconian merger amongst Nürnberg, Fürth und Erlangen. A terminus station in Bethang. A radical, terminal stop. No throughway, no getting-ahead but a turnaround. Compared with the controversial debate about the Project 21 in Stuttgart, which intends to transform the Stuttgart terminus into an underground through station, this appears as a symbol of an old-fashioned, traded idea. Would it not be far more fashionable to jet through the underground with overkill speed?

„Eins, zwei, drei im Sauseschritt“ ....Time speeds ahead.....

In 1835 railway history in Germany started on the route between Nürnberg and Fürth. On one track only – first forward and then retour. Besides travellers' beer and newspapers, and later also mail was transported. Only 60 years later the model was not competitive anymore.

Karsten Neumann suggests the elimination of this railway track which is by now already existing for 175 years. Instead, the old freight depot in northern Nürnberg shall be used for passenger traffic. After travelling from Erlangen via Fürth to Nürnberg – respectively through Bethang – the track will finally come to a stop in a terminus station. Without further ado, the artist declares the current main station Nürnberg into a repair- service- and recycling center.

The new tracks –just like Stuttgart 21 – would run through an underground tunnel The abandoned tracks would be transformed into greens for walk- and other rambling- around. No more iron-hard cuts and bruises through the city, no more bridges and underground tunnels. Northern Nürnberg – or rather Bethang District 08 – would display a completely new face. It becomes slower and a lot more cozy.

The terminus sucks speed into its deepness, tears this speed apart on it's countless tracks. The route ends in the center of Bethang, which you can than conquer by foot or – even better – with a bicycle. The rental rates for the bike shall be included in the fare according to the artist's ideas. While waiting for the next train you can spend your time comfortably sitting in the waiting hall. No First Class Lounge for first class customers. Rather, luxury for everybody. No busy-bee hectic but rather contemplative and comfortable waiting – for instance for a porter who carries your luggage or the snacks' salesman with his tray around the waist or the train conductor.

A main station that contains objects which can tell their own story by their use and wear. Rampaged goods shall not be thrown away sloppily but can be repaired or recycled in such a way that it can be re-used for a different purpose. All this is done – of course - with craftsmanship. At the same time, the production of new goods shall be reduced..

The exhibition confronts us with reference objects from a new world: a railway lamp made from a repaired lost-and-found lantern, a bicycle rental station with lush decoration, a seating utensil hamata – relax in tranquility" put together from defect chairs, the utensils of a snack salesman's tray, the jacket of a porter, a suitcase – all of these things found someplace or re-designed from found materials, everything – without exception – made from recycled material.

Beyond that, the exhibition shows some visualizations of the new city planning concept. Here, places, parks and streets are renamed, green areas are integrated into the traffic planning, new heraldic signs of cities town plaque and new street signs are developed. All this is no cost-saving program – the main station project alone is budgeted with generous 15.000.000.000 Euro.

It becomes evident: Karsten Neumann's approach is, by no means, the crazy idea of a hazardous artist. No. Instead, his project of art is the impetus for asking questions about our present situation. Bethang is a social utopia, a model to re-invent our times, a model to re-think and re-interpret the social conventions of our society. A model for a culture of awareness as the artist calls it, and for a new way to handle time and speed.

In this process of „slow – down“ the lost-and-found button turns into a precious substitute, the plastic bottle cap becomes part of „Unisex“-jewelry, the two-legged chair is integrated into a relaxing bench, the lost-and-found tire cap is a painting. The forgotten things are re-won for society, lost things turn into new capital goods. „Direct-recycling“ is how Karsten Neumann calls it

In analogy to the change process in things, there shall also be a different way on how persons interact with each other. We have been talking about porters, snack salesmen and others. Those who have got lost in our fast and effective society's value chain take on a new role in Bethang as valuable service suppliers, important honorables in a slow-down culture.

„There is nothing in your mind that was not in your senses before“, as John Locke was saying pointedly. In this context, Karsten Neumann is breaking through the routine perception with his digital collages. Possible new worlds emerge which may seem absurd – but point – in all its absurdity – to quite a few deficits in our modern world. In that way, we have to understand the artist's self-secure statement that he is „offering solutions“. Neumann develops an alternative culture – from a social, city planning and cultural perspective. This way, his art moves in an area of creative tension between art and reality. The purpose is to maintain in movement, mental movement, however in the sense of moving slowly and with awareness. This attitude is anchored in our head (one German word for terminus station is „Kopfbahnhof“ = Head Station). The other German name for terminus station is „Sackbahnhof“ which literally means „Dead End Station“. Undoubtedly, Karsten Neumann prefers the first name for his project. By the way with a souvenir shop – and a variety of memorabilia. One of them is a school globe, which has the high-speed freeway from Beijing to London marked on it, currently planned by the Chinese. Karsten Neumann suggests to run it via the Bethang terminus station. This is not the only considerable suggestion he has to make.

What Karsten Neumann presents to us here has a variety of sources in art history of the 20th century starting with the invention of the collage in 1912 followed by the „objet trouvé“, arte povera towards Fluxus and Joseph Beuys. Traces, which can be found and pursued in the catalog „Bethang – an utopia about the cities Nürnberg, Fürth und Erlangen“. Furthermore, the student of the constructivist painter Georg Karl Pfahler applies to his art an impressive light-handedness and humor. With an inventiveness and playful plentitude, which constantly keeps you fascinated, his work develops a contextual but also a great freedom in form. Plus a sensuality which knows no fear against the decorative or ornamental. It becomes evident and graspable that the composition that material which was once disposed of can blossom into a sense of beauty and – when we take a closer look – a silent statement of sublimeness.

Thank you for your kind attention.