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First escape and rescue plan for the Rhine-Main region

Artistic director: Akira Takayama
12 September until 5 October 2014

Dear ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

If you take the commuter train Nr. 8 from the Main Station in Mainz and to Hanau, the length of the journey is more or less exactly equivalent to the breadth of Greater Tokyo with its 35 million inhabitants – a expanse of urban sprawl considered impossible to evacuate, not least of all since the 2011 earthquake and nuclear catastrophe. Japanese director and conceptual artist Akira Takayama has therefore made it his business to search for individual rescue alternatives, conceive new types of shelter and chart hitherto unknown escape routes where the government has declared escape impossible.

EVACUATION begins 12 September 2014 and as the first escape and rescue plan for the Rhine-Main region, it lends new meaning to the idea of evacuation. With Frankfurt's Künstlerhaus Mousonturm as their basis, an international artistic and research team under the direction of Akira Takayama are currently developing this massive art event that seeks to connect online and urban spaces.

EVACUATION invites visitors to let themselves be guided into making new discoveries from 12 September until 5 October over the course of three weeks at up to 30 commuter train and streetcar stations along the S1, S8, S9 lines and at the stations between Frankfurt-Ost and Hanau and one additional central point in Darmstadt. These train stations between Wiesbaden, Mainz, Frankfurt, Offenbach and Hanau are transformed into the starting points for art projects, happenings, presentations and artistic ready-mades, transformations and interventions, secret gatherings and quests. And instead of the customary theatre ticket, all that is required is a valid RMV ticket.

An interactive web-portal will be launched at www.evakuieren.de on 12 September at the start of the project to assist with the necessary rescue operations: visitors will be asked to answer a few specific preliminary questions, so that the website can ascertain the individual degree of everyday frustration or urban identity fatigue. As a result of this short interview, the programme will suggest an initial starting point within the RMV network to those searching for escape, e.g. a commuter train station in the countryside, a spot in front of certain factory gates or in the middle of the city centre. The website also provides an overview of all train stations and stops involved into the project, important basic information, as well as special opening hours or possible on-site expenses that may arise. However, the website gives no more than a hunch of the events that can be encountered at the end of the respective journey.

Maps and sketches, individually designed by a team of Japanese graphic designers and animation artists for every evacuation route, provide concrete clues. They can be printed out or downloaded to a smartphone before departure. They beckon onto unusual paths, lead to unknown refuge spots, seduce you to unexpected encounters with the otherwise invisible and transform even the most familiar surroundings into urban riddles, even before successfully tracking down the actual goal.

The international project team includes artists from all genres, e.g. Mariano Pensotti from Buenos Aires, Carlos Motta from New York, Nuno Ramos and the collective OPOVOEMPÉ from São Paulo, and from Germany e.g. the artist group LIGNA, video artist Chris Kondek, directors Hendrik Quast and Maika Knoblich and composer and sound artist Anton Berman. Akira Takayama is developing the escape and rescue plan together with an artistic research group and Frankfurt curator Annette Gloser. They are assisted by students of the Hessian Theatre Academy, the Universities in Mainz and Frankfurt, the Offenbach University for Art and Design and the Städelschule – State University for Visual Art.

Production: Port B, Tokyo & Künstlerhaus Mousonturm Frankfurt am Main.

Co-production: State Theatre Mainz, Hessian State Theatre Darmstadt.

Funded by the Federal Cultural Foundation, the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, the Japan Foundation, the Hessian Theatre Academy and f.f.m. Friends & Supporters of Künstlerhaus Mousonturm.

A press conference about EVACUATION will take place on 11 September at 11 am at Künstlerhaus Mousonturm directly before the start of the project.

Press photos of Akita Takayama's prior project The Complete Manual of Evacuation, made for the Tokyo Festival 2010, and images of the Frankfurt research phase of EVACUATION can be downloaded in the press section of www.mousonturm.de.

An additional project platform will go online end of May at blog.evakuieren.de

We would be very pleased if you would report on this project in your medium.

Künstlerhaus Mousonturm

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