



green light

Lutherweg public art competition
Lutherstadt Eisleben, 2007

with Michel de Broin

We value the theme of 'Luther and the stranger' as a reference to the idea of pluralism and tolerance, which we illustrate through the representation of meadows in which different species live together. We proposed to furnish the facades in Jüdenhof Street with a number of lightboxes of varying dimensions. The boxes shine a green light which emanates from behind digital photographs of meadow herbs and grasses. Our light installation will generate a lively atmosphere which might well generate new life in this context.

The Site: Jüdenhof in Eisleben

The Jüdenhof as a station of the Lutherwalk is to illustrate aspects of Martin Luther's stance towards the foreign. Also, as a specific station, it is to illustrate something about itself as being special, yet part of the whole; and something about the city. The Jüdenhof is a strangely undefined site. Yard, square and street at the same time: the Jüdenhof, while spatially well limited, is otherwise not so well defined (any more): The loss of the one time Jewish inhabitants which gave the place its name. The current decline in the number of inhabitants and an increasing lack of social definition. An impoverishment in variation of the uses of the site: little commerce, less and less residences, little traffic. Jüdenhof will – for a foreseeable time – share a current characteristic of Eisleben (and other cities of the region): much of its houses – though centrally located – will remain empty. The character of the site is about emptiness: the void after the people have left and the lack of urban sizzle and business. Who is at home here? Who comes to visit? Who will come after? The potential of otherness, the foreign IS in the street. There is strangeness in its emptiness and in the uncertain expectance of something – what? – to come. Will this "to come" be of the place? Will it be like it was? Will it be foreign?



Luther and the Foreign

The Jüdenhof has no direct historic relevance to the person and life of Martin Luther. However the specific context calls for a reminder of pluralism and tolerance. Luther as a humanist was universalist. One criticism that we can address in the context of the station's theme 'Luther and the foreign' is, that his faith in universalism to transcend particularism was maybe not inclusive enough.

The Foreign: Light, Space, Street.

'In the darkness the light only shines when it is reflected' said Luther. In giving Jüdenhof a new light, we aim at generating a fascinating, engulfing atmosphere, which gives the whole of the street a distinct character within the overall urban texture, a benign otherness. Dynamically promising advertising signs beckon where business and commercial activity have waned. However, this commercial format has uncommercial content. The lightboxes show meadows in full growth. The green light is meant as a stimulation, which might well generate new life.

The Closer Look: Coexistence inside the Meadow

Reformation created a climate of openness and acceptance of new ideas, which generally encouraged curiosity. Luther believed that the world was beginning a new age which would bring not only a reform of religion but also a new appreciation of nature. Our light boxes show images of different meadows. Some show them as a whole, some focus on the spontaneously growing plants, others focus on the relational aspect of one element to another and show a closer look: a study of the cohabitation of different cultures. Still, the photographs are taken around Eisleben and the Mansfelder Land, Luther's Heimat. The photos exploit the astonishingly high diversity of species growing spontaneously in meadows and uncultivated lands. The idea is to bring the visitor to take a closer look at what is conventionally neglected. Our project is to frame this natural beauty in order to generate a sympathy for the hidden, the unknown, for the foreign. Taking a historical reference to Albrecht Dürers "Great Turf" which was painted in 1503 when Martin Luther was 20 years old, the meadow is our metaphor of coexistence and pluralism, which implies the peaceful cohabitation of different interests, convictions and lifestyles. Such pluralism acknowledges diversity and allows many competing individuals or groups of interest to follow their beliefs. The meadow is yet a habitat based on culture and cultivation, and carries a responsibility for action, the meadows singularities show a diversity which has to be fostered. Still, there is a unifying motif: as a whole what will emanate from the light boxes is not so much the particularism of each species, but the color green, which will send out optimism: a budding growth, an activation.

Implementation, Materiality

The light boxes are advertising aluminium frame light boxes fabricated in varying custom dimensions. They are mounted flat on the facades or hanging from them. They will be distributed evenly, but freely in the street space as a composition giving the impression of commercial advertising. To the outside of Jüdenhof, the light will only be diffuse, indirect. Also within the lighted areas, the light boxes are placed in such a way, that wherever possible the buildings themselves reflect the green light, so that the street itself emanates light. The light-boxes will be centrally switched on from dusk until late evening hours. The photographs are high resolutions digital pictures, the printing will be digital as well. We will use fade resistant macrolon support. In case of fading or damage a replacement is easy and uncostly. Maintenance: The lightboxes need regular cleaning and of course replacement of lights.