

Für all dies und für die großen Pläne, die die kommenden Jahre überspannen, wünsche ich den Machern der OSTRALE erfolgreiches Gelingen. Den Besucherinnen und Besuchern wünsche ich Genuss und Nachdenklichkeit beim Besuch der Ausstellung. Vielleicht überschreitet der Eine oder Andere seinen persönlichen Rubikon dabei, nicht unbedingt, um die Welt zu ändern, aber doch sein Bild der Welt. // "The die is cast" are the words that rung in Julius Caesar's ears as he and his troops prepared to cross the Rubicon in Italy. It is only a small river, but with it Caesar crossed an important border, created his own law and became the man who still, 2,000 years later, lives on in our minds as the emperor of all emperors. By shifting that boundary, he changed the world – even the parts of it that at the time knew nothing of the existence of Rome, and even less about that of a certain Mr Caesar.

It is possible that art – in the right place, at the right time – can have a similarly wide-reaching effect. Although it is hard for humanity as a whole to understand the importance of individual artworks, it is certainly possible on a personal level, from the point of view of a single person. Almost without exception, everyone at some point in their lives is touched by a work of art that becomes a part of their soul. It might be a piece of music, a book, a picture, or some other form of inspired creation. It is part of our nature to allow ourselves to be moved by art over and over – by art that was created centuries ago on distant continents, and by art that has just been made. Despite all the ancient treasure that exist in museums, books and online, we humans have a desire to keep creating and enjoying new works of art – and, in a process that can be just as productive as a positive reaction, to keep arguing with everything they are trying to say.

In 2013 the Ostrale decided to cross its own Rubicon and to conquer new territory. But, just like Caesar, the initial idea was not to go into foreign countries. Instead, the Ostrale sought out the land of the heart, the self and the essence. If we do not do this (and we can also read history this way) we can never really penetrate through to the foreign, to the things that exist in the distance. We are fortunate that the conquering here involves no violence, no victors and no vanquished. The aim is purely to engage in a dialogue that will, hopefully, prove fruitful to both sides.

The Ostrale also explores the possibility of overcoming borders, and the manifold ways of artistically defining the familiar and the foreign, and boundaries, exclusions and perimeters. Art must establish boundaries so that it can be seen. But it must also allow people to pass through so that it can be understood. Art can use the resources at its disposal to raise the subject of how open or closed different worlds are. The Ostrale has brought together international artists who have amassed wildly different influences from their individual cultures – so it will be fascinating to see what their works have to say about these subjects and how they bring their works into dialogue with each other.

The Ostrale also overcomes other, more practical boundaries. In doing so it is setting an example and creating inspiration. A project supported by the organisation Aktion Mensch is getting disabled people involved in building a wheelchair bridge that will eventually be covered in greenery. The Ostrale is also targeting its programme at groups who do not have a close relationship to art, such as school children. By holding the exhibition and awards ceremony of the Cool Silicon Art Award during the Ostrale, it is creating a link to technology research and to ways of creating economic value. A cooperation with the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden is highlighting invisible lines that divide generations, and is overcoming them by nurturing dialogue. Last but not least, the Ostrale is also exploring new territory in its cooperation with Dresden art galleries.

For this, and for all their ambitious plans that will continue through the coming years, I wish the organisers of the Ostrale the very best of success. To the visitors, I hope that you enjoy the exhibition and that it leaves your mind nourished and inspired. Perhaps some of you will cross your own personal Rubicon – not necessarily to change the world, but at least to alter your own picture of the world.

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