

Between Bridges
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Since last autumn many friends in the art community have, like myself, been asking themselves similar questions: 'What can I do?'; 'How can I help?'; 'How can we address a situation that's in constant flux?'

In particular we are confronted with a trio of interconnected issues:

- A large portion of Europeans not wanting to accept that the people arriving on their shores are 'real refugees'. Instead calling them economic migrants, resulting in a lack of compassion, from a position of being one of the richest continents on Earth.
- The rise of right-wing parties who take advantage of a discontent with the effects of globalisation and scare-mongering about one and a half million new arrivals into a population of 508 million Europeans. The emergence of a previously unacceptable rhetoric amongst previously unradicalised parts of the population. The fear of one million refugees caused the right wing vote in Germany to jump from 3% to 15%.
- A passionate animosity towards the European Union, the most successful peace project in the history of mankind. To look at the detractors of the EU, who work from within and outside, is a sobering wake up call.

From this month Between Bridges wants to be a forum, however small; a platform, however powerless, to discuss and organize activity from within the art community.

The open-ended project entitled Meeting Place does not offer easy or simple answers to the complex array of questions we're faced with. Hesitation however is no answer either.

The only uncompromising way to start addressing the state we're in, seems to be to get to know each other. Social science has demonstrated again and again that xenophobia increases with the distance of the 'stranger' in question.

There are many who want this moment in time, this situation, this crisis to go wrong. Whatever one thinks in party political terms, I do believe Angela Merkel's, by now much derided phrase, 'We can handle it' (Wir schaffen das) is an inspirational call to action for all.

For the last three months a group of people around my studio and Between Bridges met in weekly meetings to try and find a framework for a new programme to deal with the current political climate.

Meeting Place is an attempt to open a space for dialogue, and show that of course we can try to work this out, if only we start to get to know each other.

During the opening hours the space in Keithstrasse 15 will act as a visual showcase for information and exhibits as well as a platform for groups or individuals who would like to meet here. There will also be regular Thursday evening events around the three key issues listed above, acting as more focussed social get-togethers.

The project wants to avoid duplication and is open to be part of / lend it's resources to already existing initiatives.

Wolfgang Tillmans