



Mai Ei (Latt Win Ei Ei), Searching for nothing, Der Längste Tag / The Longest Day 2014, Zurich (5.29 – 6.26), © Urs Schmid, 2014 / Courtesy Der Längste Tag / The Longest Day



RJS art kollektiv, RJS Set 2 / what is the color of your car? – savi farba si tu vordon?, Der Längste Tag / The Longest Day 2014 © Urs Schmid, 2014 / Courtesy Der Längste Tag / The Longest Day

## DER LÄNGSTE TAG / THE LONGEST DAY. 16 HOURS NON-STOP OUTDOOR PERFORMANCES

*Performance art doesn't need to confine itself to festivals or an institutional context, it creates its own space accepting and engaging the viewer. 'THE LONGEST DAY' performance successfully proved it. Irene Müller and Dorothea Rust, curators of THE LONGEST DAY elaborate.*

Saturday, June 21, 2014: The longest day of this year started at 05.29 and ended at 21.26. From sunrise to sunset a 16 hour performance marathon took place in Zeughaushof, Zurich. Sixteen artists and artist groups from India and Myanmar, Chile, Switzerland and France were invited to show their performative works. The performance site was marked with a low circular wooden platform connecting the asphalt forecourt of the Kunstraum Walcheturm with green. Each artist had a time slot of one hour and all performances started without announcement.

Site and time slot were the only specifications for the artists who made their own artistic decisions without any thematic framework. This polyphonic decision-making gave the project its specific character and presence.

**THE LONGEST DAY – a successful history of performance events in public spaces in Switzerland**

THE LONGEST DAY was founded in 2004 by Dorothea Rust (artist, cultural theoretician and dancer) and Peter Emch (artist, professor Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK). All former editions of THE LONGEST DAY took place between 2004 and 2008 in the Kunsthof Zurich, a small courtyard in the direct neighbourhood of the Zurich University of the Arts. They attracted a large audience and met with a positive response inside Switzerland. Today Irene Müller (art historian, curator and author)

and Dorothea Rust are forming the platform DER LÄNGSTE TAG and are responsible for all curatorial issues, organisation and realization of the event. Until now THE LONGEST DAY is a unique and successful format in the cultural landscape of Swiss Performance art and related art practices such as dance or movement, sound and musical performances, installations, theatrical manifestations as well as spoken-word or interactive approaches.

**Performative claim – Performance as a claim**

The longest day of a year, i.e. summer solstice, is the day when the sun reaches its highest position above the horizon at mid-day. In the northern hemisphere this astronomical event occurs on June 21st. Since thousands of years and even in various civilizations around the globe this date contained within itself a cultural notion often of ritualistic character and collective meaning. So THE LONGEST DAY does not refer directly to these traditions but grabs the chance of a very long time span of daylight defining the duration of the event

from sunrise to sunset.

With its 5th edition THE LONGEST DAY moved from the neighbourhood of the Zurich University of Arts to the Zeughaushof. This area is defined by a former military installation. The barracks and buildings surrounding the courtyard have been transformed and re-used for cultural activities, restaurants, studios for the creative industry and for social services. Situated in a marked off area, Zeughaushof is a public space providing a specific urban and social setting. Actually, in this borrow various societal and cultural realities are confronting each other: on one hand there are the new properties of the Swiss Federal Railways and the Canton of Zurich situated directly at the Europa-Allee bordering the railway tracks and the main station. On the other hand the neighbourhood is characterised by the red light district, artist-run-spaces and various cultural activities bringing together different populations and social functions. In this respect the Zeughaushof as a specific physical reality in a transforming city area shows a distinct 'utopic' potential. Thus, THE LONGEST DAY can consider

itself as an open cultural and artistic event addressing both professional audience and passers-by or residents.

In choosing this site and with the defined structural outlines THE LONGEST DAY marked a claim – and substantiated it through its realisation: Performance art can find a place within the public space and doesn't have to articulate or hide itself in festivals or in an institutional context. The specific format of the performance marathon originates from a genuine pragmatism that inscribes the site and the day as a defined pattern. The format contradicts the myth of the live moment as well as the apprehensions over public space. THE LONGEST DAY is a platform for engaged and focused artistic projects producing a gesture of concentration both temporarily and spatially. The singularity of this project lies in its tight time structure allowing for open moments or even provoking them. The pragmatism of the format turns the whole event into one singular long gesture of concentration, structured by different rhythms of the performances. THE LONGEST DAY



takes position in the public space and in doing so questions various actual topics: the socio-political aspect of inherent rules and accessibility of public areas, the influences and requirements of spatial-performative articulation and last, but not least, the right to occupy spaces temporarily and so to change or re-designate them.

### *The 5th edition of THE LONGEST DAY*

For the 5th edition of THE LONGEST DAY not only the site had changed but also the geographical field from which the artists originate. Due to curatorial networking and personal knowledge especially of the Indian art scene we decided to invite artists from Bangalore, Odisha and Myanmar. Henceforth other cultural practices and both societal and artistic traditions have been inscribed in the locally connected space.

Smitha Cariappa from Bangalore in her performance used the natural set-up of the site: in a ritual gesture using artificial material, bought in Zürich, she put signs into the green thus creating a narrative line. Sujit Mallik from Odisha tried to define the price of the self with the question 'How much are you' with material found on site –winged tree seeds, a bathroom scale for the audience to stand on while interviewing them–he weighed thoughts and materials. And Suresh Kumar worked with an alter ego: here in Zeughaushof he put on the uniform of a gardener picking for several hours, all the flowers on site and filling a cut open football, which he put underneath a TV set meant for public viewing for the World Football Championship.

Besides all the other very interesting performances one artist group should be mentioned here: Mo Diener and RJS art collective uncovered the hidden aspect of the 'life of the Romany' with performative strategies: creating a boastful arrival in a car and with masquerade they presented themselves as actors, implementing historical information, pejorative terms and anti-Romany prejudice in an antagonistic way, using the car as a writing pad. While singing the refrain 'Love, love, love', from the famous song 'All You Need Is Love' by Beatles, they went off the site leaving behind an enthusiastic and impressed audience.

*Smitha Cariappa, yet to decide, Der Längste Tag / The Longest Day 2014, Zurich (6.29 – 7.26), © Urs Schmid, 2014 / Courtesy Der Längste Tag / The Longest Day*