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**David Schnell**  
**Friedens-Fenster**  
**Thomaskirche Leipzig, 2009**

David Schnell won the international tender for the design of the „Friedens- Fenster“ at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig. David Schnell (born 1971 in Cologne) studied painting at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig from 1995 to 2000 and was a master scholar of Arno Rink from 2000 to 2002. His work has been presented internationally in solo exhibitions amongst others at the Parsol Unit Foundation in London, the Mönchehaus Museum for Modern Art in Goslar and the MAP, Museo de Arte de Ponce in Puerto Rico. Next year his work will be presented in an exhibition series including the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, the Kunstverein Hannover and the Museum zu Allerheiligen Schaffhausen. David Schnell lives and works in Leipzig.

The Thomaskirche was built at the end of the 15th century. An example of the late Gothic Style, this building is one of the most important churches in Leipzig. From 1723 until 1750 it was the place of activity of Johann Sebastian Bach. One of the most popular and oldest boys' choirs, the „Thomanerchor“ which was founded in 1212, is up to the present based at the Thomaskirche.

The atmosphere in the church is mainly created by the stained glass windows which date back to a restoration inspired by the Neo- Gothic style at the end of the 19th century. In this way the Friedens- Fenster by David Schnell joins the series of Neo- Gothic personal commemoration windows in remembrance of Martin Luther, Johann Sebastian Bach and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

In the concept of David Schnell's „Friedens-Fenster“, fragmented architectural structures and landscaped elements refer to the situation in fall 1989 when the „Friedliche Revolution“ (peaceful revolution) in Leipzig announced the collapse of the governmental system.

Leipzig was the place where an alternative public society was formed as a result of several gatherings in churches like the Nikolaikirche and also the Thomaskirche, which allowed for a political awareness beyond the governmental system. The first „Leipziger Friedensgebete“ (Prayers for Peace) were held already in 1982. They were the initial points of the „Montagsdemonstrationen“ in 1989 which soon became the promoter of mass demonstrations with around 300.000 people during the „Friedliche Revolution“ (peaceful revolution).

The oppositional movement got more and more established and organized. The refugee crisis in summer 1989 caused a crisis of the system itself, which developed into a governmental crisis in winter 1989 and resulted in the end of the GDR.

The paroles of the „Friedliche Revolution“ (peaceful revolution) which became the slogans of an until then stigmatized democratic society were not only „Keine Gewalt“

(no violence) inspired by the „Sermon of the Mount“ but also the sentence of Rosa Luxemburg: „liberty is always the liberty of different thinking people“ („Freiheit ist immer die Freiheit der Andersdenkenden“) and in the course of claiming self determination the slogan „Wir sind das Volk“, which only can ex post be interpreted as a sign for the upcoming „deutsche Wiedervereinigung“ (German Reunification).

The peaceful demonstrations worked as a catalyzer for the governmental crisis which took off in Leipzig. The emerging out of the shadow of that alternative public society under church patronate in a just then establishing political public on the streets expressed the general public call for liberty. This process was transcribed in the composition of David Schnell's „Friedens-Fenster“.

The interface between a politicized space in the church and the reality of an until then not existing political public space is expressed by the artist through a combination of architectural structures and landscape elements and opens up the architecture with a look-out to the outside.

The „Sermon on the Mount“ ist the biblical reference for nonviolence in this stained-glass window. The pastel colour scheme of the window can be seen as a reaction to another dark coloured window in the Thomaskirche which commemorates the victims of World War I, and stands in opposition to an event like the „Friedliche Revolution“ (peaceful revolution).

As in his painterly oeuvre, David Schnell's „Friedens-Fenster“ describes representationalism not in a sense of figurative detection or precise optical experience. The abeyance (Schwebezustand) between naturalism and abstraction expresses the moment of uncertainty which accompanied the protagonists of the „Friedliche Revolution“ (peaceful revolution). The thought of the massacre on Tiananmen Square in Beijing was omnipresent, still such a bloodbath didn't happen in Leipzig in spite of the firing order.

The „Friedens- Fenster“ reflects the impact of the „Friedliche Revolution“ (peaceful revolution) as a passive and active act united in one. It creates a space of reflection which expresses the tendencies towards peace and liberty in a spatial and notional way. According to Erwin Panofsky's essay „Perspective as Symbolic Form“ from 1927 the miracle becomes a direct experience of the observer not in the sense of an illustration but as an opening of reflection space, which referring to Ernst Cassirer in the description of the symbolic form, connects a specific sign to an intellectual semantic content.

David Schnell's „Friedens- Fenster“ disturbs the statical construction. The subversion of the spatial proportions, the relation between inside and outside does not lead into a breakdown but in non-violent dissolution and absence of gravity. The opening of the space is accompanied by the association of stepping outside like the people who implemented the „Friedliche Revolution“ (peaceful revolution)

Numerous antipodes get together in a moment of spatial and temporal detonation; figurative and abstract, active and passive, in a perspective construction and a spatial ambiguity. The abeyance between concrete forms and abstraction is similar to the moment of departure, uncertainty and tension at the same time. Perspective and foresight in a double sense.