

100T poets for change+++100Tpoetsforchange+++100T poets for change

Tempelhof Park & the Seeds of Change



Poem forest Tempelhof Park 24 Sept 2011

It was a perfect day. The weather goddesses smiled on us as we entered the main gates of the old airfield at Tempelhof. Our poetry forest close to the entrance grew by inspiration and improvisation. Down the slope, the three poetic graces of Neukölln, Anna, Nina and Lucia, set up the sound system while poets and audience parked their bikes, spread rugs and jackets, unpacked their picnics and waited for the show to start.





The poetry forest grew. On the site where an iconic airport rose up in the 1920s, where Hitler's terror troops marched on parade, where Stuka dive bombers were assembled in underground tunnels for the Nazi Luftwaffe, the scene of one of the last battles of World War 2 in 1945 and the landing place of the raisin bombers of the US Air Force airlift bringing vital supplies to Berlin's people during the Soviet blockade at the height of the Cold War in the late 1940s -- there, on 24 September 2011, we decorated symbolic tree trunks with scrolls, planted poems in bright woven pots and hung out verses while poets read works and made speeches in many tongues. All in harmony and synchronisation with 100T Poets for Change, a worldwide movement started by US poet Michael Rothenberg.

Our poems for the day, displayed in English and German, included Shelley's *Ozymandias* -- the warning against all delusions of grandeur the world over -- and Heinrich Heine's satirical epic, *Deutschland - Ein Wintermärchen* (Germany - A Winter's Tale), a ballad for free thought and against state oppression written in 1844.



Planted poems: Shelley's "Ozymandias"

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert... near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

P.B. Shelley, 1818

Ozymandias

Übersetzung:

*Ein Wanderer kam aus einem alten Land,
Und sprach: „Ein riesig Trümmerbild von Stein
Steht in der Wüste, rumpflös Bein an Bein,
Das Haupt daneben, halb verdeckt vom Sand.
Der Züge Trotz belehrt uns: wohl verstand
Der Bildner, jenes eitlen Hohnes Schein
Zu lesen, der in todtm Stoff hinein
Geprägt den Stempel seiner ehrnen Hand.
Und auf dem Sockel steht die Schrift: „Mein Name*

*Ist Osymandias, aller Kön'ge König: –
Seht meine Werke, Mächt'ge, und erbebt!
Nichts weiter blieb. Ein Bild von düstrem Grame,
Dehnt um die Trümmer endlos, kahl, eintönig
Die Wüste sich, die den Koloß begräbt.“*
(Übersetzung: Adolf Strodtmann 1866)



Blowin' in the wind: pages of Heine's classic ballad, "Germany: A Winter's Tale"

Back at the mike, with a growing crowd of poetry lovers, eager readers, inline skaters, joggers, ice cream lickers, bikers, hikers and curious bystanders, Lucia declared, "War is not sustainable", and gave a bravura performance of Spanish poems from her own pen. She was followed by a host of other poets, local and from far afield, reading in German and English. Poems intimate and personal; or angry, sorrowful and political. In the background, silhouettes of the historic airport buildings, and the green, green grass and tarmac stretching away into the distance.



"... the lone and level sands stretched far away."

Happy birthday Anna Blume

Everybody was having a good time except the men from the park authority and Ordnungsamt (public order office) who had nothing better to do on a peaceful sunny afternoon.

They arrived on four wheels, dismounted and demanded to know why we were having an unlicensed gathering. We'll give you 10 minutes to clear up and get out, they said.

That's order for you, Berlin style.

But poets are inventive folks. It took less than a second for a bright spark to dream up a birthday party for Nina, one of the reading organisers, aka Anna Blume. When the men in official T-shirts came back, our skilful poetry diplomats negotiated a truce. And the show could go on.



"10 minutes to get out!" - park warden and security guard take a dim view of poetry. Thomas listens politely.

Meanwhile, back at the mike, jazz musician Paul Brody lifts his trumpet to the skies to blast an impromptu "birthday tribute" to Anna Blume. Loud and clear. The audience whoops and cheers.



Happy birthday, Anna Blume!

(Connoisseurs of German art & literature might recognise the name: "Anna Blume" is a famous dadaist poem written in 1919 by the great avantgarde artist Kurt Schwitters.)

100T poets and their Berlin sisters and brothers can't be beat...

10 minutes later...



Smiles all round - a creative truce

... and the happy birthday girl herself - Nina aka Anna Blume:



After that successful interlude, the rest was poetry party with loads of spontaneous participation from young & old.



Swahili saying - an added bonus

"It means 'I feel as good as a banana!'", she said.

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Hölderlin cited by Thomas Schliesser



everybody welcome - chinks provided by 100T poets Berlin



Street poem by Karen Margolis

Street poem:

THE PEN IS MIGHTY

Wrote a poem

to reach a man

-- he ran



Wrote a poem...



as afternoon shadows fall...

...

Almost time to leave Tempelhof Park...



But no Berlin event -- and especially an international one like 100T Poets for Change -- is complete without the café to round it off.

Central European culture at its best and richest.

Café engels, close by Tempelhof Park main entrance, welcomed us and opened its space to poets of the world for the weekend in a temporary exhibition to mark the big day of global poetry.

The rest is pictures and unforgettable memories of peace, sun and poetry on a late September afternoon in Berlin.



café engels: T-shirt to go



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Curator Thomas Schliesser with special creation: 100T T-shirt

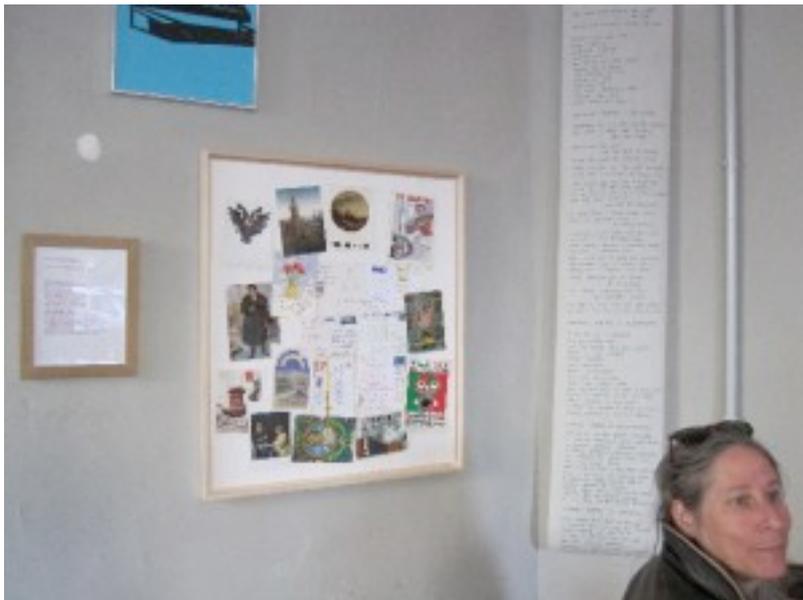
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Visiting artist Kurt Stadler from Graz, Austria, installing his specially created 100T Poets for Change T-shirt

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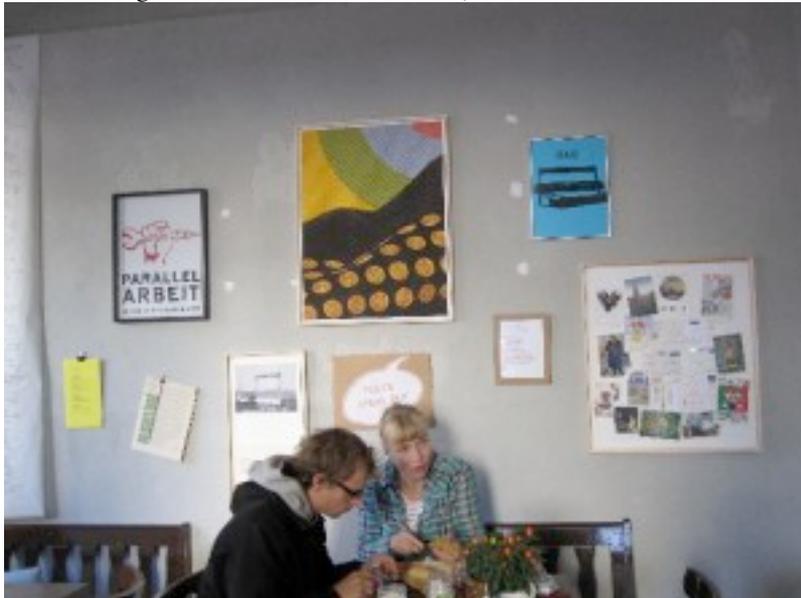


Dmitry Sokolenko's postPOST Mail Art (centre)

Pure poetry, art & café culture:



Poetry fan Dieter S. admires the work of his great love, Heinrich Heine (hanging beside: Chanticleer Magazine, ed. Richard Livermore)



Poetry tastes better with fresh ciabatta; left to right: art works by Thomas Feuerstein, Dmitry Sokolenko (XIX), Thomas Schliesser (Bad Bank) and Dmitry Sokolenko (Mail Art); bottom row: Wall poem (Karen Margolis, photo Holger Kulick)

All credit to Dmitry Sokolenko (XIX and postPOST Mail Art), Thomas Feuerstein (Parallel Arbeit), Richard Livermore (Chanticleer poetry magazines) and Thomas Schliesser (numerous artworks).

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A big thank you to Michael Rothenberg for the grand idea, Terri Carrion especially for visual support -- and our Berlin friends Cathy Saxon and Dieter Staecker.

Extra thanks to Nina and Matthias and all the angels from Café engels, Neukölln.

Special thanks to Thomas Schliesser for mounting the exhibition and co-organising the big day in Berlin.

© Karen Margolis

Berlin, 25 September 2011
