

# Hans Schabus

## Das Rendezvousproblem

November 20, 2004 thru January 16, 2005



**Kunsthhaus Bregenz**

### Press conference:

Thursday, November 18, 2004, 11.30 a.m.

### Opening:

Friday, November 19, 2004, 8.00 p.m.

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When at Frankfurt's Manifesta IV the artist **Hans Schabus** (born in 1970 in Watschig, Austria) showed a video of himself on his boat "forlorn" on a strange journey through Vienna's sewer system, it became clear that here a new and complex artistic work was unfolding. In another major work, "Astronaut" (2003), the artist also created an interdisciplinary maze using filmic work, spatial installations, architectural fragments, and linguistic references. The entrances to the exhibition spaces were blocked. Instead, the unsuspecting visitor was sent along a path through labyrinthine basement corridors. Coming from below through the historical building, one emerged in the 1:1 scale model of the artist's bare studio, which had been erected as a complex sculptural construct in the middle of the exhibition.

Destructing, investigating, erecting anew: the work of Hans Schabus always addresses the theme of the role of the artist in space and, vicariously, the role of the viewer as travelers inward into the realms of their conscious and subconscious. It relates to such artistic traditions as the approaches of Bruce Nauman and Gordon Matta-Clark but also, in a wider context, to the literary work of Otto von Guericke, who in 1672 in his study "New Magdeburg Experiments About the Vacuum" wrote about "place and time," the "vacuum," and "space."

Carrying on the tradition of the **Kunsthhaus Bregenz** and its exhibitions of the work of Daniel Buren, Olafur Eliasson, or Pierre Huyghe, among others, Hans Schabus transforms the entire building into a complex and convoluted architectural and mental path of discovery in search of the self.

Through a process of assimilation and approach that included many visits to Bregenz over a period of more than a year, the artist has planned an exhibition that will encompass the entire building. His experiences, the train ride to



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Bregenz – especially the tunnel section and the “artistic structures” along the Arlberg line – will all be part of the exhibition.

A real and fictive referential network stretches from the artist’s studio and work place in Vienna to Bregenz, penetrating and altering the Kunsthaus. Through his precise knowledge about the site, history of the building, and inaccessible zones of the Kunsthaus and its engineering facilities, Hans Schabus offers visitors new and unfamiliar insights and experiences. His thoughts, sketches, and plans, the gradual process of concretization the exhibition went through, have all been recorded by the artist in his agenda, which will be published as an artist’s book in conjunction with the exhibition.

While painstakingly researching the history of the region, Schabus discovered that the exhibition opening fell on the exact same date as that of a historic rendezvous problem: the breakthrough of the Arlberg tunnel. 121 years ago, on 19 November 1883, this symbolic geographic dividing wall between Vorarlberg and the rest of Austria was penetrated. Coincidentally, the projection of the extension of the Arlberg tunnel railway forms a precise right angle to the Kunsthaus. Thus, according to Schabus, all preparations were complete for launching his great undertaking.

As an invisible part of the exhibition, Schabus takes the extension of the Arlberg tunnel down to the second basement of the Zumthor building. He sees the imaginary junction in the storeroom and workshop areas, which are off limits to visitors. Schabus continues to elaborate this picture: he fills the first basement with part of the excavated material and dumps the rest of this virtual earth over the Bregenz train station. More references come together like the strands of a dense fabric, for while the dumping of earth is based on the actual construction of the Bahnhof Langen (the train station was built in 1884 on earth excavated from the Arlberg tunnel), the idea of a never-ending tunnel headed for the center of the earth also makes reference to Friedrich Dürrenmatt’s short story “The Tunnel.”

The main **entrance of the Kunsthaus Bregenz** is blocked. Instead, the visitor enters the building via a wooden walkway that runs along at the height of the delivery ramp of the freight elevator, passes through it, and from there leads down to the ground floor. The entire floor area has been protected with pond liner and secured at the walls with sandbags. Puddles of water, fire hoses, and pumps call to mind the state of the building during the deluge of 1999, when the Kunsthaus was flooded from three sides by Lake Constance. The hoses lead into the twelve-meter-deep collector duct en-circling the entire building, the lowest level of the structure. The groundwater entering this facility is pumped out onto the ground floor, thus producing an “inner,



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inverted” deluge. The architectural circuits are in this way redirected against the building itself.

**The first floor** is a harbor for countless stranded boats scattered throughout the room. Like a multitude of fish species, the sundry types of boats are a contrast to the hermetic atmosphere of the exhibition space. Looking out at nearby Lake Constance, the rendezvous problem becomes pressing. Among the boats one also finds the “Optimist,” specially built by Schabus for his expedition through the sewers of Vienna.

The darkened **second floor** becomes an enormous projection space. Hans Schabus projects the train trip to the Kunsthaus onto the three supporting wall segments. The artist – like the student in Dürrenmatt’s short story – moves as the protagonist through the service and storerooms of the building, finally being transported upstairs by the freight elevator. The visitor’s real movement through the exhibition coincides here with the artist’s filmic journey through the tunnel. At the end of all the exhibition spaces, the journey comes to a temporary halt with a panoramic view from the roof of the Kunsthaus.

Modernist art is marked by the idea of the “white cube,” an ideal exhibition space that recedes as much as possible in order to let art fully come to the fore. It springs from the notion of a self-referential art beyond political, economic, or social components. In his installation on the **third floor** of the Kunsthaus, Hans Schabus reflects this framework of thoughts by undermining it. The extension of the supporting wall segments (and thus the reality of the architecture) gives rise to a rectangular area in which Schabus erects a space out of pallets stood on end on top of a double layer of soft drink crates. The interior of this space is completely lined with white cardboard, thus producing a perfect “white cube.” Schabus also refers to the so-called “whiteout effect,” as described by those who have encountered extreme situations while on polar expeditions or Atlantic crossings. What is meant by this is the loss of physical and mental orientation in the empty space of a contourless, glaring white landscape. This ideal space construction is similar in outward appearance to the artist’s work for the Bonn Kunstverein “Transport” (2003) – a projection space assembled out of existing partition walls. A link to its surroundings can also be seen in the building’s substructure as a historical reference to the pile foundation structure typical of Lake Constance or to Peter Zumthor’s first model of the Kunsthaus, which was perched on piers.



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## KUB Art Education

**Artist breakfast and discussion with Hans Schabus**  
**Saturday, November 20, 2004, starting at 10:00 a.m.**

The artist breakfast offers a special opportunity to meet the artist **Hans Schabus** personally. At this event Hans Schabus will be glad to answer questions about his work and the exhibition at the Kunsthhaus. It will also be a good opportunity to have your exhibition posters autographed.

A discussion between **Hans Schabus** and **Director Eckhard Schneider** is scheduled for 11:30, immediately following this breakfast.

A small fee of 14,- euros to cover breakfast expenses (includes admission to KUB and the discussion) will be charged. We ask you to call in advance to reserve a space: (+43-5574) 4 85 94-9.

**Accurately Transposed...**  
**(A Rendezvous Between Voice and Double Bass)**  
**Sunday, November 21, 2004, 8:00 p.m.**

On Sunday, November 21, 2004, at 8:00 p.m. the actress **Renate Bauer** will give a reading of texts related to the exhibition. Musical interpretation shall be provided by **Rosario Bonaccorso**, one of the most sought-after jazz musicians in Europe. The two performers, who transcending the distances posed by space and language are also a couple on a private level, set forth in the dialogue between voice and instrument the dilemma of rendezvous problems formulated in the exhibition title.

**Tunnel Construction and Surgery – Three Perspectives of Investigating Space**  
**(Hans Schabus, Hubert Rhomberg, Etienne Wenzl)**  
**Friday, December 3, 2004, 7:00 p.m.**

In a fascinating juxtaposition of two short lectures in which the handling of materials, space, and people are reflected upon from very diverse perspectives, **Hans Schabus** will illustrate his personal artistic point of view. **Hubert Rhomberg**, the director of the company Rhomberg Bau in Bregenz



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will talk about the construction currently taking place on the Löttscherbergtunnel (CH) section of the railway as well as about the challenges and problems of tunnel construction in general. Other examples of projects by Rhomberg Bau are the renovation of the Pfändertunnel or the tunnel system connecting the Arlberg road and railway tunnels.

The second perspective of the investigation of space is offered by **Etienne Wenzl**, the chief surgeon at the Vorarlberg regional hospital in Feldkirch. His short lecture outlines practice-oriented and ethical topics in surgery done on the human body (eg. endoscopy).

#### **Nativity Play by Hugo Ball**

**Tuesday, December 7, 2004, 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.**

On Tuesday, December 7, 2004, at 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. at the Kunsthaus Bregenz the Wiener Kabinetttheater will present the Dadaist version of a nativity play that Hugo Ball staged for the first time in 1916. This artist was the mastermind of the Zurich Dada movement and one of the founders of the Cabaret Voltaire. The piece involves a score that consists exclusively of noises and »incoherent« text. The date of performance of this onomatopoeic rarity was consciously scheduled to directly follow the Nikolaus and Krampus holidays since a rendezvous problem can be seen in both of these cases.

#### **Lecture Karl-Josef Pazzini**

**Wednesday, December 8, 2004, 7:00 p.m.**

On Wednesday, December 8, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. **Karl-Josef Pazzini** (research and teaching position for art, education, and psychoanalysis at the University of Hamburg) will speak on the subject »If I cannot bend the Higher Powers, I will move the Infernal Regions. On the difficulties of escaping the delusion.« Freud began his »The Interpretation of Dreams« with this epigram. In chapter seven he addresses the limitations and deference to depictability, but strangely he also contends that a thing only exists in the first place through its depiction.



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## **KUB Publication**

### **Hans Schabus “Das Rendezvousproblem”**

Known above all for his spatial and video installations, Hans Schabus produces work that is closely related to spatial thought and experience. Schabus sees himself as an explorer and, in his work, ventures out on an expedition to unknown territory.

Planned in close cooperation with the artist, an artist's book which follows Schabus' artistic strategy in image, text, and concept and records the process of development of the current works for the Kunsthaus Bregenz is being published in conjunction with the exhibition “Das Rendezvousproblem”.

Texts by Winfried Nußbaumüller and Rudolf Sagmeister, the famous tale “Der Tunnel” (The Tunnel) by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, as well as Schabus' unusual and precise sketches and drawings round off the exploration of the artist's visual thinking. Color images of various installation views will document Schabus' central themes.

#### **Hans Schabus**

##### **Das Rendezvousproblem**

With texts by Winfried Nußbaumüller and Rudolf Sagmeister

English/German, 128 pages

Hardcover with bookmarker ribbon

Price: € 45,-

Edited by Eckhard Schneider

Publication date: November 2004



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## **KUB Edition**

### **Hans Schabus**

With this edition developed specifically for the Kunsthaus Bregenz, Hans Schabus presents an extremely personal part of his work history. The four selected photographs depict the artist himself on his “Optimist”-class sailboat “forlorn.” Schabus built this boat for an expedition through the Vienna sewer system, but his journey has also taken him to Frankfurt, to the East River in New York, and finally to Bregenz and Lake Constance. His travels to unfathomed waters suggest the theme of being in transit. Since the artist thinks in transformable forms of movement, however, he touches upon universal questions of overcoming time and space. This extraordinary edition is an interim stocktaking that examines this ongoing journey for the first time.

#### **Hans Schabus**

##### **Ohne Titel, 2004**

4 photographs, mount with title (silk-screen print), portfolio

Limited edition of 40 pieces, numbered and signed, each image is 50 x 40 cm

Special price during the exhibition: 800.– Euro, incl. 10%VAT, plus

forwarding expenses. Purchase price after the exhibition: 1,000.– Euro, incl.

10% VAT, plus forwarding expenses

Publisher Kunsthaus Bregenz



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Opening hours:  
**Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.**  
**Thursday 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.**

The Kunsthhaus Bregenz would like to thank its partners for their generous financial support and the cultural commitment that goes along with it.



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