

Kunsthaus Bregenz

Karl-Tizian-Platz | Postfach 45 | 6901 Bregenz

Telefon +43-5574-48594-0 | Fax 48594-408

kub@kunsthhaus-bregenz.at | www.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at

Austria



KUB 2023.01 | Press Release

VALIE EXPORT

Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me

04 | 03 – 10 | 04 | 2023

Press Conference

Thursday, March 2, 2023 at 11 am

Opening

Friday, March 3, 2023 at 7 pm

Press photos for downloading

<https://www.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at/en/press/valie-export>



Tubes hang from the ceiling. Galvanized organ pipes dangle like stalactites from above, others cast slender, pointed shadows onto the glass walls. In addition to these, smaller ones made of lead are on display on the ground floor of the Kunsthaus Bregenz. Along one wall, wooden blocks are lined up, forming a monumental relief reminiscent of Arte Povera of the 1960s and 1970s. All of the pipes come from the pilgrimage church dedicated to the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary, located on the Pöstlingberg in Linz, which is the birthplace of the artist. VALIE EXPORT sees the figure of the Virgin as illustrating the image of women found in religion, based on a simplified dualism of “good” and “evil.” Women are either venerated in terms of an ideal (Mary Mother of God) or ostracized as sinners (Mary Magdalene). The organ of the well-known Baroque basilica is in the process of being replaced with a new one, and VALIE EXPORT is taking over the old stock. She is using the decommissioned pipes to create a “sound sculpture” – a composition made of audible and visible elements, conceived especially for the imposing space of the Kunsthaus Bregenz.

In the entry hall, visitors enter into a massive sound structure. A group of seven musicians plays a song by Charles Mingus. The African American jazz musician composed the song in 1961, at the height of the Cold War conflicts. *Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me* is at once prayer and howl. The plea is repeated insistently, a mixture of fear and lament. In light of the recent events in Ukraine, the song takes on a painful urgency. VALIE EXPORT had a number of the pipes combined into a so-called “Stalin’s organ,” the nickname Germans gave to the Soviet Union’s Katyusha rocket launcher. The sculpture recalls the dreaded battery of missiles from World War II, pipes pointed upward, ready to launch. Here, the pipes have ceased to be sacred soundemitting objects associated with peace and salvation and instead suggest terrifying projectiles bringing destruction and death.

VALIE EXPORT first used Mingus’s song in 1989 – the year generally seen as the end of the Cold War. In the documentary film *Aktionskunst International. Dokumente*

zum *Internationalen Aktionismus* she summaries the art history of the 1960s. Mingus's song provided the soundtrack for the Situationist International. VALIE EXPORT explains the movement as an art form chiefly concerned with subjective experience and dissolving the boundaries between art and life. She also interprets the organ pipes as "subjects" that come together as a many-voiced choir. The instruments, moreover, are modeled on the human body. They need the flow of air just as people need to breathe. In musical jargon, the air slits on the body of the pipes are called "lips." As early as 1969, the feminist artist explored the human voice theoretically and artistically. In her conceptual work *Tonfilm* (Sound Film), she created a link between light and sound, between expression and fear. In it, a photoelectric amplifier was inserted into the glottis and connected to a light-sensitive resistor on the ear. When light was shining, the person began to scream involuntarily. The subject was turned into a desperate machine. The sound sculpture for the Kunsthau Bregenz revisits this notion and updates it in terms of the current political agenda - the urgent desire for peace.



You are listening to an arrangement by Peter Madsen, a longtime member of Charles Mingus's band. The piece was played by Madsen and six additional musicians, including the renowned Vorarlberg singer George Nussbaumer. The recording took place on January 13, 2023 in a studio in Hard, near Bregenz. The musicians played the organ pipes like flutes or drummed on them like percussion instruments.

"At the time, the song was written out of fear of the atomic bomb during the Cold War, and now it ties uncannily well into our present fear."

Biography

VALIE EXPORT



VALIE EXPORT (b. 1940, Linz), Media artist, performance artist, and filmmaker, is based in Vienna. In 1967, VALIE EXPORT invented her sobriquet as an artistic concept and logo, which she permitted to be written only in capitals. The artist participated in documenta 6 in 1977 and documenta 12 in 2007 in Kassel. In 1980 she represented Austria, together with Maria Lassnig, at the Biennale di Venezia. For her outstanding artistic achievements, VALIE EXPORT was awarded the Roswitha Haftmann Prize in 2019 and the “Golden Nica” Prix Ars Electronica in 2020, while also receiving the Max Beckmann Prize from the City of Frankfurt in 2022.

VALIE EXPORT has already been shown at Kunsthaus Bregenz in her solo exhibition *Archiv*, in 2011. In 2023 there will be exhibitions by VALIE EXPORT in Winterthur, Vienna and Berlin.

KUB Billboards

VALIE EXPORT

Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me



The KUB Billboards for VALIE EXPORT's exhibition offer insight into how a music piece is produced, a process typically not open to the public eye. At the heart of the artist's sound sculpture at the KUB is the song *Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me* by Charles Mingus from the early 1960s. For the Kunsthaus Bregenz, the jazz pianist Peter Madsen created a new arrangement of the piece and recorded it together with his band. The six KUB Billboards along the Seestraße in Bregenz display photos of the seven musicians recording the piece. They document the work in the studio and extend it into public space.

Peter Madsen (piano), Herwig Hammerl (double bass), Martin Grabher (drums), Cenk Dogan (alto saxophone), Fabio Devigili (tenor saxophone), Adrian Mears (trombone), George Nussbaumer (vocals).

The KUB billboards located on Seestraße, the main thoroughfare in Bregenz, city's busiest street, are an integral part of the program. They extend the respective KUB exhibition into the public space.

KUB Publication

LP with Booklet



As early as the late 1970s and early 1980s VALIE EXPORT, together with the artist Ingrid Wiener, produced two LPs in Berlin's Kreuzberg district, *Wahre Freundschaft* and *Bananen*. Now she's making a third album in connection with her KUB project. For the ground floor of the Kunsthaus Bregenz, VALIE EXPORT is creating a sound sculpture consisting of organ pipes and a song by Charles Mingus. The sound of the organ pipes and jazz pianist Peter Madsen's newly arranged and recorded version of Charles Mingus's *Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me* make up the heart of the album. A vinyl booklet accompanying the album includes photographs documenting the work in the exhibition space and the musical process of creation. An extensive conversation between the artist and KUB Director Thomas D. Trummer sheds light on the new work created for the KUB.

VALIE EXPORT

Oh Lord, Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me

LP with booklet

Peter Madsen (piano), Herwig Hammerl (double bass), Martin Grabher (drums), Cenk Dogan (alto saxophone), Fabio Devigili (tenor saxophone), Adrian Mears (trombone), George Nussbaumer (vocals)

Edited by Thomas D. Trummer, Kunsthaus Bregenz

Design: Fabian Bremer

Booklet: German / English, 30 × 30 cm, 8 pages

With a conversation between VALIE EXPORT and Thomas D. Trummer

Publication date: March 2023

Price: € 19

Distribution: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Cologne

Available at Kunsthaus Bregenz and online

shop.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at

Lighting Replacement

20 | 02 - 31 | 03 | 2023



Concurrent with its exhibition of works by VALIE EXPORT, decisive modernization measures will be taking place at the Kunsthhaus Bregenz. For the first time since the building's construction over twenty-five years ago, the lighting is being completely renovated. From February 20 to March 31, 2023, the current light sources throughout the building will be replaced with LEDs. The lighting system's previous electricity consumption can thus be reduced by more than fifty percent. The new system is part of the KUB's ongoing modernization and energy-saving measures realized in the last couple of years. With support from the State of Vorarlberg, the Kunsthhaus Bregenz is setting new standards as an art institution in this field. This will be one of the rare occasions that the public has the opportunity to experience parts of the Kunsthhaus Bregenz completely empty. During this time, a supporting program on the iconic architecture by Peter Zumthor will take place.

Partners and Sponsors

Kunsthhaus Bregenz is grateful to its partners for their generous financial support and their ongoing commitment to culture.



Principle sponsor
of Kunsthhaus Bregenz



With the generous
support from



Partners



Media partners

