

# 'THEY ALL WENT TO THE BEACH.'

Interventions in public space

1.11 - 6.11.2016

COME TOGETHER: 4.11.2016, 19h

Novomatic Forum, Friedrichstraße 7, A-1010 Wien (vis a vis Secession)  
during Urban-Vienna [www.urban-vienna.at](http://www.urban-vienna.at)

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An empty swing. No one here. They all went to the beach, and a playground is left behind, forsaken. The freedoms have also expired that should actually be granted to a child if it is to develop in a healthy way. Playful curiosity? Moribund. Total emptiness, and yet: no room for others. "Our" place is already occupied. The tent is full.

A dilemma of the age we live in: finding the balance between free time and work. Between relaxation and action. "Free time" is crammed full of excessive, compulsive activity. Suicidal ennui is the result. People run away from "real" life, flee into illusory worlds.

The beach doesn't stand for relaxation any more, contemplation, getting back to nature, beneficial sociability. The main priority is to be perpetually busy, to look and be looked at, body enhancement, rivalry.

Another aspect that was lost here was the active and empathetic participation in an entire society and its well-being. People land on the beach after arduous journeys. All the others stare, but no one wants the "aliens" or wishes to bother with them in the long term. They only have time for overactivity for and in their own life.

The beach stands for desires, but mostly only those that fulfil you for no more than a brief moment – that do not foster long-term satisfaction. Flaring up behind the extremes of this hedonistic socie-

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ty is a great listlessness, emptiness and detachment. People permanently try to cover this up with repeated compulsive activity. In a time of great contradiction nearly everyone burns out very quickly – especially as all protective space is lacking, nor is there time for people in any way to come back to themselves and start thinking again – to focus on the essentials. There's only enough energy left for one-off highlights, which, however, force people to choose at random, confuse them, so they end up with tunnel vision.

Society is standing on rickety legs; the moment of the explosion might come quite suddenly: when our unstable house of cards topples, and uncontrolled human rage breaks in. The filigree glass bursts, the swing stops dead, the match is lit. So, let's throw stones at the glasshouse before it explodes of itself. We are “burnt-out” anyway to a great degree, we've nothing to lose any more. Then the tension might be released at last and the way paved for constructive energy sources. New perspectives could be opened up, also in the “head” – human subjectivity is one of our mightiest tools. Courage! The swing would pick up tempo again in dynamic momentum.

The Jan Arnold Gallery is hooking up with this state of contemporary society with five outdoor installations, providing insight and focus into the difficulties that are (ought to be) preoccupying us at the moment. And this in the direct vicinity of a romanticised hotspot of photo-tourism in Vienna: next to the Secession.

Text: Erika Eisenhut

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