



künstlerhaus bethanien gmbh : press release

Berlin, 4th September 2009

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to invite you to the opening of the following exhibitions:

**ROMEO GONGORA**

**Volkskunsthalle / People's Art Space**

18th September – 4th October 2009, Studio 2

**Artist's Talk:** Saturday, 3rd October, 2 pm, Studio 2

**TOMASZ KOWALSKI**

**gniazdo**

18th September – 4th October 2009, Studio 3

Mi – So, 14 – 19 Uhr

**Joint Opening:**

**Thursday, 18th September 2009, from 7 pm**

**ROMEO GONGORA's** works investigate questions of representation, the authenticity of emotions, and an awareness of being different. He works on his installations, actions and performances in the environment in which he is currently living, collaborating with members of different social groups. His work includes extensive research and a production process in which he attempts to ascertain how socio-psychological constructs are anchored in individuals, and to what extent. Continual dialogue with those involved is characteristic of his cooperative working method, as well as the collaborators' decisive influence on the outcome.

Romeo Gongora's most recent work, *Volkskunsthalle / People's Art Space*, consists of two installations which change over the course of the exhibition period and a series of individual actions – Gongora deliberately refers to these as "demonstrations" – that take place in the exhibition space, bringing together people who struggle for their personal freedom in various ways. Each demonstration leaves behind some material evidence in the exhibition, which develops into documentation of what has happened and modifies the exhibition over the course of time.

*Volkskunsthalle* looks to examine the interrelations of suppression and dominance upon which a society and its morality are based; the production strategy employed includes improvisation, the

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unexpected and the non-existence of any 'screenplay'. This reflects Romeo Gongora's working method, whereby the development process is always more important than the final product. *Volkshalle* was conceived during Gongora's one-year stay at Künstlerhaus Bethanien and investigates or rather reacts to processes of transition and renewal, in the surrounding Kreuzberg area as well. It was also here that Gongora found his participants and invited them to his demonstrations. (Project information: [www.romeogongora.com](http://www.romeogongora.com))

**ROMEO GONGORA**, who was born in Guatemala in 1974, lives and works in Montréal, Canada. He studied fine art and media art at the Université du Québec à Montréal (MA, 2005). Exhibitions incl.: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Galerie de l'UQAM (Montréal), Centre d'art contemporain OPTICA (Montreal), Centre de diffusion et de production de la photographie VU (Quebec City), Gallery 44 (Toronto) and Centre de photographies actuelles DAZIBAO (Montreal). Romeo Gongora holds a fellowship from the Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa, and the Embassy of Canada, Berlin in the context of Künstlerhaus Bethanien's International Studio Programme.

**TOMASZ KOWALSKI's** paintings and installations fascinate the viewer with their highly imaginative details, from which the artist creates strange scenes and scurrilous stories. Kowalski's pictorial worlds make extensive use of the iconographic repertoire of art history, combining echoes of Brueghel and Bosch, still-life works by the Flemish masters, or naïve painting as recognisable citations to create new, apparently surreal landscapes and interiors. Tomasz Kowalski is not searching for something completely new; his focus of interest is the changing way in which we see past trends and art movements.

The muted, rather dark colours that Kowalski prefers to use, or the cobweb-like structures repeatedly found in his works, point to the deep and incomprehensible dimension of time, which is given precedence over space in his work as a painter. In the latest works, Kowalski groups together key themes and motifs from past paintings to create a new form resembling installation. He presents staged insights into objects' inner life, into organic parallel-worlds comprising wooden, matt and interlocking colours, behind whose surfaces there is apparently little of a tangible nature.

The exhibition *gniazdo* in Studio 3 consists of a complex installation with one or two wax figures dressed in dark clothing in a kind of stage set with strange props – a black vinyl record, objects made from modelling clay and all manner of furniture. It seems as if one of the artist's dreams has taken shape in a theatre scene including the stage set and actors. *Gniazdo* – which means something like "nest" – expresses Kowalski's interest in the 20th century Polish avant-garde: it is no coincidence, therefore, that his 'stage' is reminiscent of Tadeusz Kantor's absurd, unreal scenography.

The gallery carlier | gebauer, Berlin is showing a comprehensive individual exhibition of work by the artist from 10th September to 10th October (opening: 9th September 2009).

**TOMASZ KOWALSKI** was born in Szczepleszyn, Poland in 1984. He lives and works in Krakow, where he has been studying painting under Prof. Leszek Misiak at the Art Academy since 2004. In 2009, Tomasz Kowalski received the Eastern Europe Fine Art Fellowship from the Schering Foundation, Berlin, which includes twelve months residence and a presentation of work at Künstlerhaus Bethanien. The fellowship is being awarded for the sixth time by the Schering Foundation ([www.scheringstiftung.de](http://www.scheringstiftung.de)).

Heike Catherina Mertens, President of the Cultural Section at the Schering Foundation, will speak at the exhibition opening on 17th September 2009 (from 7 pm); words of welcome by Malgorzata Lawrowska, Representative of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Berlin; introduction by Christoph Tannert, Director of Künstlerhaus Bethanien.