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Photo: Franz Luthe

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### **Künstlerhaus Dortmund**

#### **The Nostrils of Frau von der Leyen**

**Ursula von der Leyen has dark black nostrils and dirty ears. Peer Steinbrueck's vampire teeth shine. And Wolfgang Schaeuble looks like an alien. This is the result when artists turn to the subject of politics.**

Or more to the point, when Daniel Behrendt concerns himself with the subject. Behrendt from Hanover, made portraits of the government officials and had his mother embroider these onto German Democratic Republic handkerchiefs. The caricature-like results hang on washing lines in the Kuenstlerhaus Dortmund – at any time replaceable, fleeting glimpses on the rotary clothes-drier of power.

“I wanted to create a bridge of tension between the abstract, the more concrete and poetic positions”, says the curator Patrick Borchers. The exhibition “politics” with all its fine formalism makes its point, to show how art and politics can come together.

There are not many artworks but those that “take up the concept” are profound: The video “Trains” by the British Tanya Ury has its premiere (in Germany). Inspired by the “Train of Memory”, she confronts the history of German Rail. Postcards of trains hit hard against the conscience, as they roll on rails that were most likely Nazi deportation routes. Till Rohmann has created a sinister soundtrack from ambient sound recorded at the concentration camp Maidanek.

Also to be seen for the first time in Germany is “what would it mean to win?” a documentary video by Oliver Ressler and Zanny Begg of the protest demonstrations against the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm. And Myriam Thyges takes up the complex construction of the EU nations with her flag metamorphoses.

Stefan Moersch and Stefano Giuriati sound out the areas of tension between national borders and power relations in very different manner: Moersch has created reproductions of Lebanese state security border huts that, while maintaining the essential feature of the flag, the exact design varies according to whim: red and white slanting, horizontal, vertical. That could never happen in Germany...

Concurrently Giuriati with his friend Giannotti realise an almost banal but wide-reaching concept: the two of them disguise themselves as Italian Carabinieri, walking around Munich for 14 days. And what do you know – in spite of the erroneous context the “badge” of uniformed power worked. Both were accepted as custodians of order.

**An Aside:**

*In what way can art be political? And what effect can political art necessarily have? A wide field of discussion manifests itself here.*

*How contentious this subject is, not just for the observer, made itself apparent on the press round: The artists Tanya Ury and Stefan Moersch got into each other's hair. This is a “pitiful debate” says Moersch – leaning casually against the doorframe. “Art can't be political.”*

*The Englishwoman, who has dealt with German history in her work, looked at him distraught: “I don't share your opinion at all”, she declared, irritated. “Since the Second World War, as an artist there has been a lot do. And it has been very important.”*

*Words were flying in all directions, voices were being raised. Well – if that isn't a good start!*

(Translation from German Tanya Ury)

[www.kuenstlerhaus-dortmund.de](http://www.kuenstlerhaus-dortmund.de)