

Johannes Willi  
***Ich heisse Luft***  
a sleepover installation

at LAGO MIO Lugano artist residency  
curated by Benedikt Wyss

Saturday, 2 March 2019

LAGO MIO artist residency will inaugurate with the temporary installation «Ich heisse Luft» by Basel artist Johannes Willi.

After Johannes Willi spent many nights in the old villa on via Cattedrale in autumn/winter 2018, he decided to pass on his unique experience: an overnight stay in the labyrinth of rooms. He is providing the equipment for the sleepover: tents, sleeping mats and homemade candles, blankets and pyjamas.

The installation «Ich heisse Luft» and the premises of the LAGO MIO Lugano artist residency, which will open its doors to the first artist in summer 2019, will be publicly accessible on the evening of 2 March 2019. Visitors are invited to spend the night in the installation, followed by a brunch and a boat excursion the next morning.



The following conversation between Johannes Willi and Benedikt Wyss took place on the shore promenade of Lago di Lugano on 28 February 2019.

Benedikt Wyss: The exhibition title hits the bull's eye for visitors who know your work. Johannes Willi, the «Luftikus»: a light-hearted, carefree, sometimes ruthless character, but never malicious.

Spontaneous and fleeting. Do you escape simple connotations? Not to be taken too seriously at first, only to get stuck somewhere in the windpipe?

Johannes Willi: I hope so. I like the negative connotation of the title: «Ich heisse Luft» means «My name is air» and reminds at the same time of the winged word «nothing but hot (heisse) air (Luft)». From some people's reactions to the title, you can see that they feel "hot air" fits my work. Some find that attractive, others less so. A feeling, somehow human, somehow physical. Something will happen. We expose ourselves to a heat. Almost erotic, hot air on naked skin.

BW: How do you put this into practice? The starting point for the title was the situation where you, as a «pilot artist», lived in the residency in winter in unheated rooms without light or hot water.

JW: Right, that was the starting point. I asked myself how I could make this experience come alive for visitors.

BW: Now they'll find ten new tents in pretty rooms in a beautiful old villa. Light works, heating also, hot water on top of that.

JW: It was never important to me that people had to freeze like I did. I'm more interested in other things. For example in the fact that all of the tents and mattresses, as we can't afford them, will be returned to the online seller within 30 days. Our possessions are nothing but hot air, *heisse Luft* – and the guests become part of this.

BW: Part of what?

JW: Part of the fraud. And thanks to the shared experience they become part of a community. The twenty people know each other only partially – and are invited by us into two-person tents.

BW: For this experience you offer not only the personal equipment, pyjamas and blankets your mother sewed but also a boat trip over the Lago di Lugano after everyone has breakfast together. Where will you take us?

JW: I see myself as a trackman, a researcher, with very limited knowledge. The weekend offers me the opportunity to go on a search together with my guests. It is not a Sunday trip, but a common research excursion. We drive to the gigantic building that you can see when you let your eyes wander over the lake.

BW: The casino of Campione.

JW: When I was here for the first night in July 2018, the casino's facade shone in bright light. A rich place, a source of hope for great earnings. Money is not a fixed currency – a fact which we profit from with the fictitious purchase of tents. It's all hot air, *heisse Luft* – a piece of paper, metal, a token. The following evening I looked over the lake again and the lights were gone. The hope, the heat, vanished. The casino went bankrupt.

BW: 600 people unemployed.

JW: I know the situation only by hearsay and I hope I can understand it a little bit better this weekend. As far as I know there was a wave of empathy and mutual help. Some of the former employees are Swiss, some Italian. Campione is an Italian enclave surrounded by Swiss soil, whatever that means. Apparently the

Swiss are much better socially insured than the Italians. So, in solidarity, some of

these, together with a few associations from Ticino, have set up a space where more than 200 families can stock up on goods for free. Misery has produced social coexistence. A story both tragic and beautiful.

BW: And tents trigger all kinds of connotations.

JW: Yes. Some see refugee camps in the Mediterranean: people looking for perspectives, better opportunities. The built-up existence, all possessions are left behind. Others see camping: the tent as a refuge from reality, as a simulation of life. Hot air. Under precarious conditions we try to free ourselves. We make a fire to warm up our beans. Not as comfortable as at home, yet more relaxed. We leave behind the burden of our existence, all possessions, for a while.

BW: Which takes us back to the residency.

JW: Where at best the artist can leave behind the duties of everyday life that distract him from his vocation. Another place, other people, concentration on the new and on oneself.

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Lugano artist residency  
Via Cattedrale 15  
6900 Lugano

## **LAGO MIO**

Lugano artist residency

Inauguration: 2 March 2019, 7 pm  
open by appointment

On July 1, 2019, up to two artists will move into the LAGO MIO summer residency. In addition to the free stay we want to provide a per diem and a production budget. Therefore we are looking for financing partners willing to support the project. The milestones are the following:

### **March 15, 2019**

open call for artists  
& assemble committee

### **April 15, 2019**

application deadline  
(motivation letter)

### **May 15, 2019**

selection of artists

### **July 1, 2019**

start of residency  
(two months)

### **August/September**

final exhibition

LAGO MIO is an artist residency in the heart of the city of Lugano, a stone's throw away from Milano, in the canton of Ticino, *sun porch* of Switzerland.

The 19th-century villa is located in the old town just below the railway station, above the roofs of the city, overlooking the lake.

Lugano, also known as the country's third-largest financial centre, is a precious lake and mountain nest with interesting institutions of contemporary art and home to a large number of collectors.

Although the institutions offer a wide cultural proposal to the public, only few opportunities, run by independent associations, are offered to artists to spend time, living, producing and sharing their experience.

LAGO MIO was born out of the need to fill this gap. A summer residency giving artists the opportunity to live, work and exhibit in Lugano.

Each residency period will end with a final exhibition.

## **ANY SUPPORT IS WELCOME!**



founded by Carlotta Zarattini & Benedikt  
Wyss, organized in cooperation with a  
committee yet to be defined

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