



Angel of Culture

Art project for promoting
intercultural/ interfaith dialogue

Angel of Culture

In our globalised world peaceful and respectful coexistence of peoples, no matter how varied their backgrounds, culture and world view, is the foundation of a worthwhile future. This only becomes possible through getting to know one another and through intensive social interaction.

Through events held in public spaces our **Angel of Culture** art project promotes the coming together of different cultures and faiths and it supplements the dialogue engaged in by various groups in society with an element that can be experienced through the senses.

These performances actively involve citizens and representatives of public bodies and the various religious communities, as well as young people in particular. The collective action involved gradually creates a **social sculpture** which, by interlinking a whole variety of towns, cities and countries, recognisably and lastingly gives expression to and embeds the desire of the majority in society to coexist in mutual acceptance of diversity.

The art events and the preparation of them at the respective places where they are held involve lively exchanges and the clarifying of diverging positions between people of differing religions and cultural backgrounds. This dialogue manifests itself on the day of the actual art event and is continued afterwards. The project and the intention behind it are perpetuated in the schools involved through theoretical and creative learning activities relating to the symbol.

Towns and cities in Germany and other European countries take part in the events that are described in more detail on the following pages – on our journey to the European Cities of Culture, which in 2010 are primarily eastern European cities – and through joint action they send out a strong message of peace and reconciliation.

The art project counters divisive tendencies through the formal coherence of the image:

No one group can be extracted from this circle without all the others also evidently being damaged.

The **Angel of Culture** therefore always acts as a clear statement against right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, fundamentalism and the marginalising of entire groups of the population that they entail.

The project is pursuing a further goal with this stance: a sculpture for the Middle East. A multi-layered pillar physically grows over the course of the years, its individual elements being created at each event through the active participation of the population (see the event for installing the floor inlay). The installing of this is planned to take place in Jerusalem where it is to document just how many people are actively committed to coexistence in mutual acceptance of diversity and have provided physical tokens of this wish in a whole variety of locations, which simultaneously form a **Sculpture of Solidarity** for this conflict-riven region. The numerous hand-crafted parts from which this pillar is formed are therefore intended to inspire the peoples of the Middle East to maintain their unremitting endeavours to find a just peace, and to express the fact that people in Europe and beyond are standing by them in their efforts.

Carmen Dietrich und Gregor Merten





The permanent floor inlay

During this art event the **Angel of Culture** is set in the ground in the form of a ring made of steel, a special blue-dyed cement and an aluminium framework. This enduring symbol is being installed in public squares, in places of worship of the various faiths, and in schools or other institutions.



As part of a locally prepared intercultural celebration representatives of the respective town or city and of the religious communities and schools as well as local citizens will lend a hand with the embedding of the inlay.



Following the laying, a blow torch will be used to produce the same symbol for the next city.

Here too, the people who are present – with particular preference given to young people – are actively involved, as hand-crafting gives an image such as the **Angel of Culture** an especially strong and lasting resonance.

The active involvement of various participants gives the result of this process an original and personalised character.

After they have been cut out using the blow torch, the parts are separated from each other using the sledge hammer.

This produces the ring, which is subsequently cast in blue-dyed cement and finished in the workshop for its next point of call.

The production of the inlay in this way by the citizens of one town for the next means that the people and the towns involved symbolically create a link between each other in a conscious spirit of joint responsibility for peaceful and respectful coexistence.



The pillar for Jerusalem

The edges of the inner shapes of the angel that are also created each time the symbol is cut out are marked with the location and date of the event and are stacked on top of each other, and in this way they form piece by piece the ever-growing pillar for Jerusalem.

All the towns involved literally support each other in this sculpture and thereby proclaim their wish to coexist in mutual acceptance of diversity in their town or city, in their country, and in the Middle East and throughout the world.





Temporary performance with the rolling sculpture

The **Angle of Culture** sculpture that is used everywhere, a hollow steel body of 1.50 metres in diameter, is taken by local residents to religious institutions of the various religious communities, to memorials and schools, and to other public institutions and public spaces where a sand cast is produced in each case. Through their joint active participation representatives of the religions, schools and the public give expression to their willingness to cooperate and interact with each other.

The art event with the rolling sculpture is carried out before the laying of a permanent inlay, and it serves not just to involve people belonging to the institutions visited, who are among those accompanying the sculpture on its route and taking part in the laying of the inlay panel, it also serves to raise awareness and feeling of common 'ownership' among a wider audience.

At the staging posts along the way the sculpture is laid on its side and the inside of the ring is filled with a layer of white silica sand.

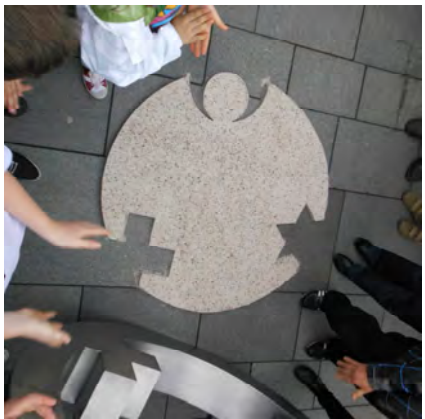


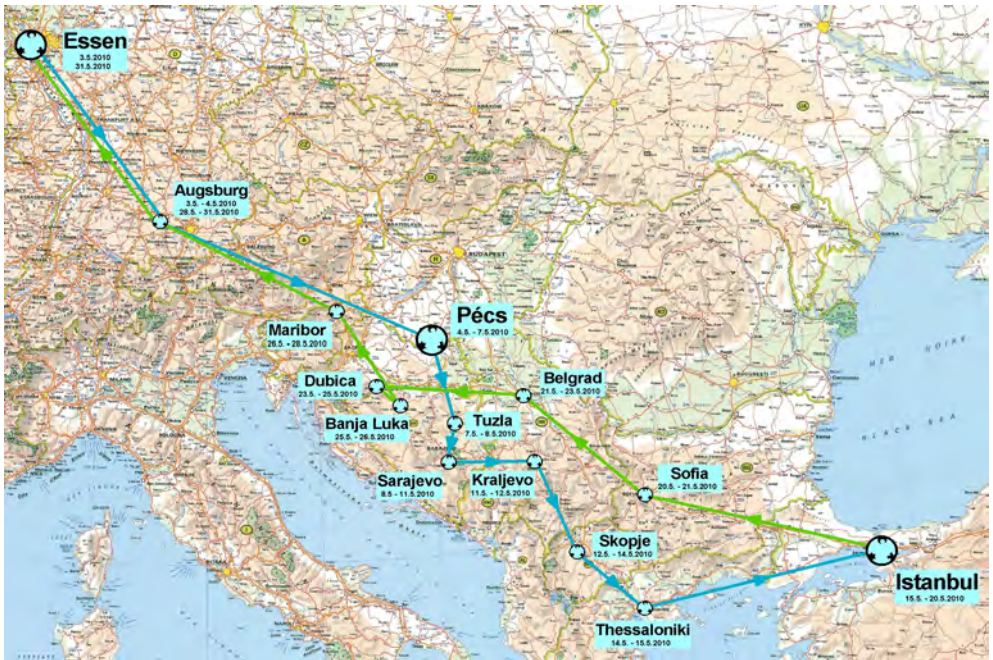
Contributions are made by various parties, speeches are made, musical and theatrical performances are given, and prayers are said for peace etc.

After the sand has been spread, the people present help to raise the ring again with the aid of heavy-duty magnets, leaving behind the transitory image of the angel.



The repeated production of the temporary sand casts along the route of the rolling sculpture illuminates this symbol in various places in the respective city and thus promotes the peaceful and respectful coexistence of cultures.





Abraham caravan Angel of Culture

In May 2010 the Angel of Culture sets out as the Abraham caravan from Essen in the Ruhr to travel through south-eastern Europe to Istanbul in Turkey in order to bring together through this symbol the **European Cities of Culture 2010** – the Ruhr conurbation, Pécs in Hungary, and Istanbul in Turkey.

On this route the caravan visits many other towns and cities in the Balkans (see map). Events involving local people are held with the Angel of Culture everywhere. In **Pécs, Sarajevo, Skopje, Istanbul, Banja Luka and Dubica** permanent floor inlays are installed at especially poignant sites.

In the towns the events lead to interfaith and intercultural encounters. A variety of symbolic actions leave their mark along the way and so build ties of friendship and understanding between the people involved.



Pécs/ Ungarn



Sarajevo/ Bosnien Herzegovina



Skopje, Mazedonien



Istanbul/ Türkei



Dubica/ Bosnien Herzegovina



Militärgeistliche in Banja Luka



Participation of schools

Young people/ school students are included in all the towns and cities in which the art event takes place. The image of the Angel of Culture can be used in a whole variety of ways with children and young people of all ages for the interdisciplinary exploration and development of the whole subject of "Multicultural and multi-faith coexistence in mutually enriching tolerance and respect" as a way of preparing for participation in the events.



The students can create their own artistic interpretations of the symbol and prepare contributions (musical, theatrical or written etc.) which are shown and performed on the day of the event.



Angel of Culture art event at the EU Parliament in Brussels

At this event held at the EU Parliament in June 2012 we were supported by many school students and other people from Germany who are interested in the project. After we laid a floor inlay at the Chapelle pour L'Europe the young people moved the rolling sculpture to the square in front of the Parliament where the President of the Parliament, Martin Schulz, delivered the speech of welcome. We made a sand cast together with him and the other people present and laid an inlay for the next staging post, and consequently also an angel that will become part of the pillar that will be erected in Jerusalem. (Information, films and photos on the event are available at <http://www.engel-der-kulturen.de/aktuelles.html>)



President of the EU Parliament, Martin Schulz:

"The Angel of Culture is a peerless symbol of the European idea. The sculpture conveys the message of respect and humanity ... It would be hard to find a better expression of how people are interconnected despite differing religious and cultural backgrounds.

On 19th June the Angel of Culture had arrived in Brussels. There the two artists from Burscheid installed the Angel of Culture as a floor inlay in front of the Chapelle pour L'Europe. They then rolled the angel from there to the Simone Veil Square directly in front of the European Parliament where several hundred people, including young people in particular, watched the production of the temporary sand cast.

Cohesion in Europe across political and cultural boundaries is of immense significance, especially in current times. In a democracy tolerance and acceptance of those who are different are the prerequisite for living together successfully.

With this in mind the Angel of Culture has moved me greatly..."



Angel of Culture®

ArtStudio Gregor Merten and Carmen Dietrich

Herkensiefen 6

D-51399 Burscheid

Tel. +49(0)2174 – 780258

info@engel-der-kulturen.de

www.engel-der-kulturen.de