



## **EXHIBITION**

### **MOSQUES IN GERMANY**

#### **A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY BY WILFRIED DECHAU + MODELS AND PLANS OF MOSQUES RECENTLY BUILT IN GERMANY**

05. – 21.09.2009, Hall F3, Admission free

OPENING: FRI 04.09.2009, 9PM (FOLLOWING THE SYMPOSIUM)

#### **Speakers at the opening:**

Dietmar Steiner, director of the Az W

Wilfried Dechau, photographer

"I didn't expect any architectural highlights as architecture history has been written over the past twenty or thirty years with churches, temples and synagogues, not with mosques – apart from a very small number of exceptions." The photographer Wilfried Dechau was commissioned in March 2008 with producing an exhibition of photographs to accompany an architecture conference on mosques in Germany. The conference was held because of a long-running dispute over mosques triggered by the new plans for a mosque in Cologne-Ehrenfeld which had been filling the colour supplements of Germany for months. The exhibition of photographs was intended to help people take a pragmatic view of everyday life in German mosques. In Austria, too, tempers rise at regular intervals when mosques are the issue – currently in the case of the recently completed mosque in the Lower Austrian spa town of Bad Vöslau.

This photographic report, completed in Spring 2008, on mosques in Germany does not show standard architecture photography with its aesthetically loaded atmosphere but a purely documentary approach to illustrating the people in the mosques and the surrounding urban context. The photographer Wilfried Dechau provides us with an insight into spaces that usually remain closed to us: the spectrum of eight mosques shown ranges from the disused car repair shop in Karlsruhe to the bold new building in Penzberg that symbolise a history of decades of immigration. The openness and candidness of the people shown in the camera of Wilfried Dechau lends the photographs their particular appeal. The exhibition is supplemented by models and plans of mosques completed recently.

The photographer was born in 1944 in Lübeck, Germany, and graduated as an architect from Braunschweig University of Technology. In 1995 he initiated the 'architekturbild' European prize for architecture photography; since 1999, member of the German Photographic Society; since 2004, on the academic committee of the Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau. He has received numerous prizes and awards for his photographs, including Photobook of the Year at Eyes on Books, Mannheim, in 2006.



## SYMPOSIUM

### MOSQUES TODAY. THE BRIEF, AND SOCIO-POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Fri 04.09.2009, 3 – 9pm, Admission free

The heavily discussed mosque in the Lower Austrian spa town of Bad Vöslau is to open soon, and when it does it will still only be the third building of its kind in Austria. While Germany is experiencing an unparalleled building boom in the sector – with 184 mosques currently under construction or in planning – Austria is lagging well behind this pan-European development. What is ignored is a frequently obvious fact, despite all the polemics: Muslims also prefer suitable places to congregate for prayer in place of rear courtyards or disused factory halls. In the final analysis, such buildings also pose the question of public perception, which at best finds its manifestation in the transparency of the architecture.

In his book 'Euroislam-Architektur. Die neuen Moscheen des Abendlandes' (published in 2008) Christian Welzbacher calls for a debate on quality aimed at a contemporary form for Islamic sacral architecture – as there are hardly any architectural restraints dictated by religious tradition.

## PROGRAMME

**Welcome address:** Dietmar Steiner, director of the Az W / Ashley White, Presse- und Kulturreferentin für Österreich, Deutschland und die Schweiz im US-Außenministerium, Washington, DC

**Speakers:** Christian Welzbacher, art historian and writer, Munich: 'Euro-Islamic Architecture' / Azra Akšamija, artist and architecture historian, Aga Khan Programme for Islamic Architecture, MIT Cambridge/USA: 'Mosque as Identity' / Hüsni Yegenoglu, architect, Univ. Dozent Technische Universität Eindhoven: 'The Mosque as Will and Vision' / Sabine Kroissenbrunner, head of the Task Force für den Dialog der Kulturen im BM für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten, Vienna: 'Islam in Austria and Europe'

A panel discussion follows with the speakers, and guests: Omar Al-Rawi, Member of Parliament with special responsibility for Islamic integration, a representative of the Muslim community in Austria, and Christoph Prinz, mayor of Bad Vöslau.

**Moderated by** Gudrun Harrer

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