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Art and events without bounds and borders

Arabellapark Art Forum

An initiative of the Munich City Library and the Open University

Hagen Meyer-Kröger

Münchner Stadtbibliothek, Stadtbibliothek Bogenhausen
Munich, Germany

Intro:

I am delighted to be here, representing a cultural initiative of the Munich City Library and I would like to thank the Public Libraries Section of IFLA for giving me the opportunity to talk about it. My background is over 30 years of experience in public libraries mostly as a leading person. At present I am managing the Bogenhausen public library with 15 employees and three colleagues working on a temporary basis, a stock of 70 000 medias, half a million borrowed books and 240 000 visitors per year.

Summary

Art and Events with International Flair

Arbellapark Art Forum

An Initiative of the Munich City Library
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It is an undeniable truth for city planners and politicians that the economic power of a city should reflect – as much as possible – upon the local cultural landscape.

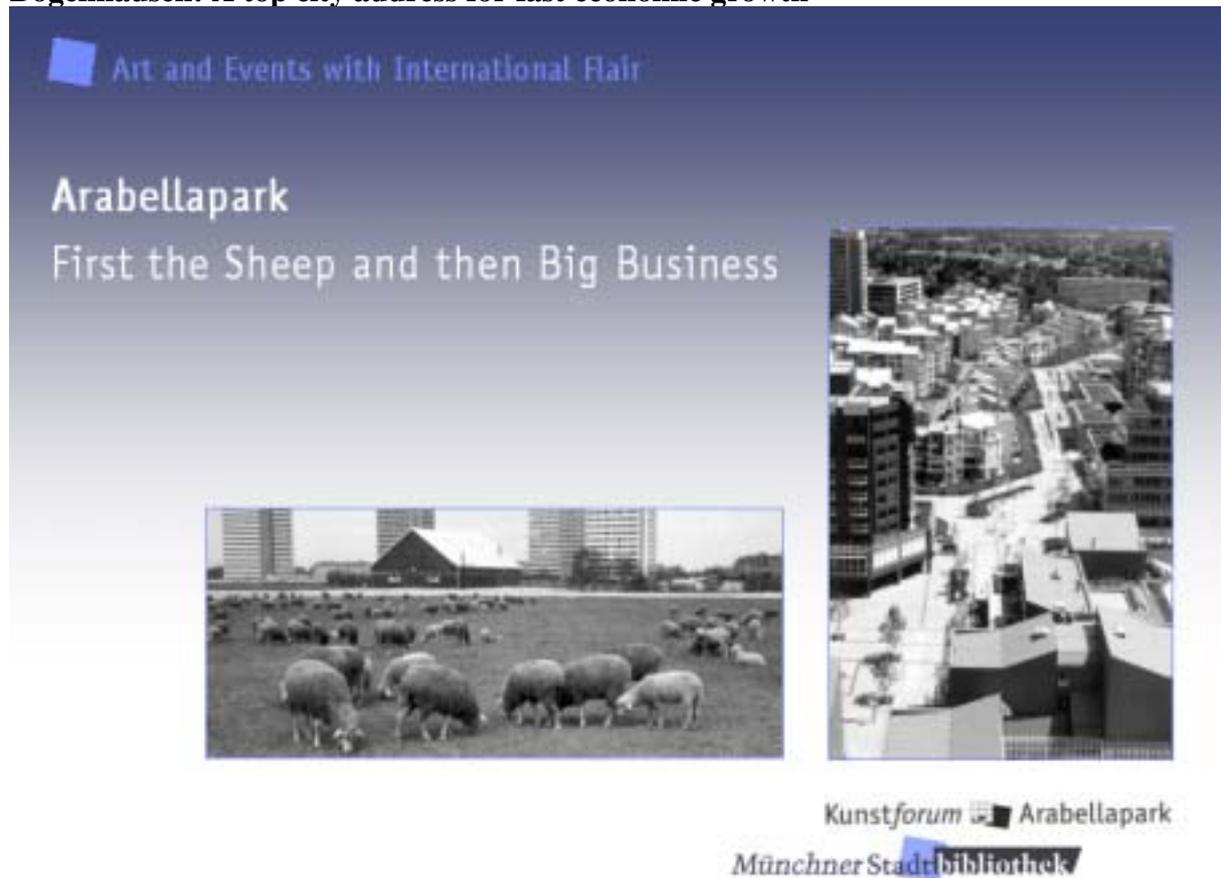
However, what in the beginning seems to be quite the best thing to do, keeps very often ending up in being a cultural temple, which leaves too little financial flexibility for other cultural domains.

A different way was chosen by the model Bogenhausen district with his Arbellapark Art Forum.

The basic principle was simple. Instead of a luxury institution we took two already existing educational establishments to work together. In order to create a new cultural center, which is more effective and doesn't cost a lot.

In this way for the last 15 years, a small engaged staff of the Munich City Library und Open University has been practising cultural work with international touch for the benefit of the Bogenhausen district of Munich. The idea to open up a new horizon and remove spiritual barriers by presenting contemporary art and a program of qualified events was received enthusiastically by the audience and is a contribution of enrichment for the Munich cultural scene. This initiative should be kept up even if the financial means would be further diminished.

Bogenhausen: A top city address for fast economic growth

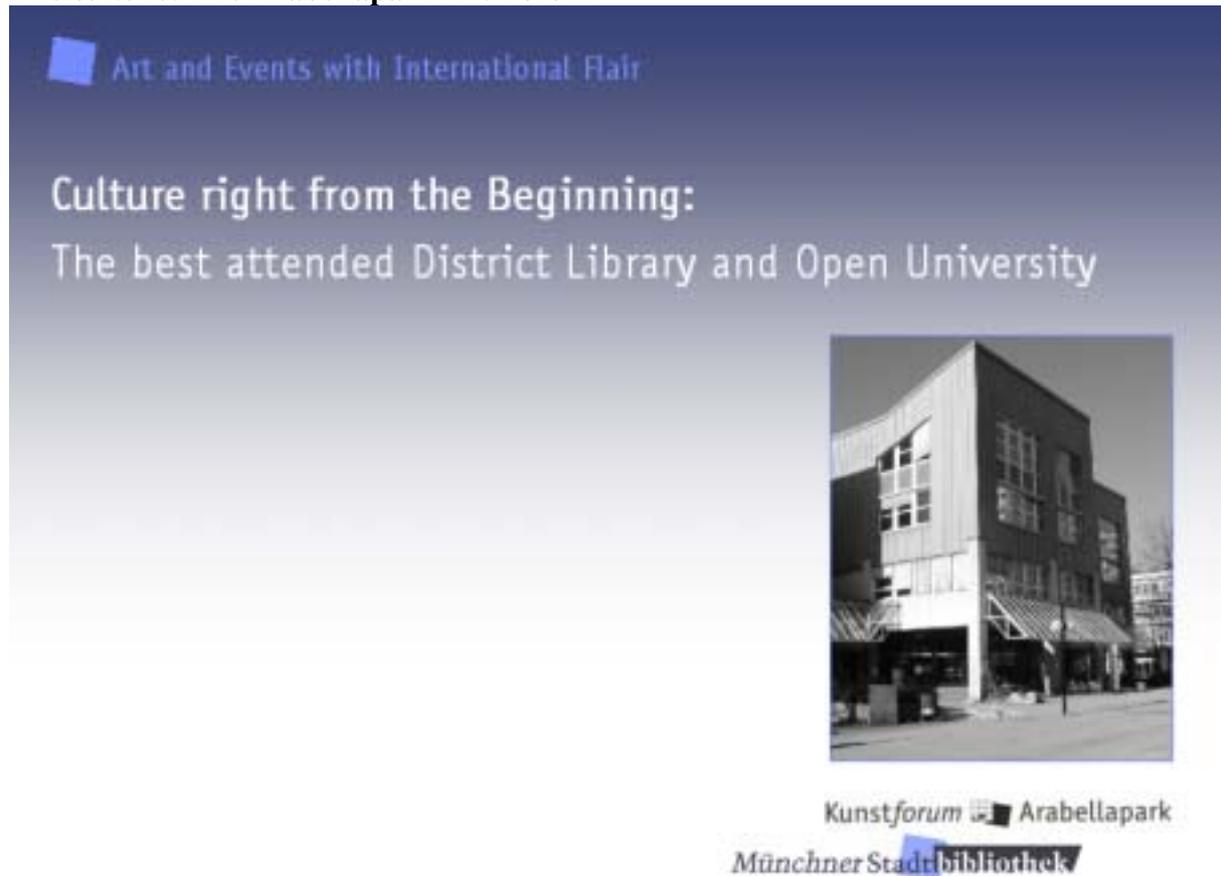


In 1984 a new city in the city arose in the noble Bogenhausen district (North-East Munich), in the shade of the Arabella skyscrapers, where two decades earlier the sheep were still led to pasture; this was Arabella Park, projected by the Schörghuber Enterprise.

Since then, banks, publishing houses, insurances, ministries, hotels, all sorts of high-tech firms, movies, restaurants und luxury shops have been leaving their stamps on the image of Arabella Park. This is true, above all, for the over 20.000 people who live there in order to make their money in one of the computer and advertising companies, lifestyle editorial staffs, medical or solicitors' offices.

Wherever one turns, high-tech and business, career women and young managers are seen. But, where is culture left in this promising city of a Munich district?

The culture: The Arabellapark Art Forum



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Culture right from the Beginning:
The best attended District Library and Open University

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Culture is, in fact, not represented by a Concert Hall or by a museum, as the Munich property giant Joseph Schörghuber was dreaming about, but by one of the biggest and best attended district libraries in Munich and by the outstanding branch office of the Munich Open University. Both are cooperating in the same building on Rosenkavalierplatz 16.

Books, media and further education for all citizens means quite a lot to the cultural improvement in this city district but is not at all a matter of facts in the Munich city landscape. But there is more to say about these two cultural institutions: both the city library and the open university enjoy favourable working conditions – a big, light, two-floor foyer and separate exhibition surfaces in the library itself. – Combining ideas, courage, and idealism, the initiators came up with the suggestion to put coloured blobs on the walls – confronting the visitor with modern art, after he had finally found his way to the City Library and the Open University – the Arabellapark Art Forum was born.

For the Opening, a favourable moment was picked up: the Arabellapark Art Forum opened its gates in October 1988, to coincide with the opening of the noble subway N. 4 to Arabellapark with marble fountains at the terminus.

A huge crowd attended the first art opening day, with city councils making festive speeches, and with three prominent artists of the Bogenhausen district attending: Columbia-born Raquel Hofer who had settled down in Munich, Susanne Clever und Rose-Marie Altrogge, who had actively taken care of the City Library and the Open University and, besides, had joined in working out the concept of the Arabellapark Art Forum.

Their belief was:

“Our painting should stimulate to enforce humanity against the frigidity of the city’s indifference and set colour accents within the grey of the surrounding world.”

The concept

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One Color Blob more:
Arabellapark Art Forum was born

Our painting should stimulate to enforce humanity against the frigidity of the city's indifference and set color accents within the grey of the surrounding world.



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Tolerance and openness, art without bounds and borders for every citizen almost on his doorstep, in this way providing cultural livening up of a rather commercially oriented area – these have been and still are the essential maxims of the Arabellapark Art Forum. This is a Forum for young, talented, still unknown artists, who cannot afford or do not wish a professional gallery. Debutants, fresh graduates from an art academy or self-taught artists with professional qualities are very welcome. Craving and looking for something else; the lively Library and the Open University – this is the spiritual background of the Arabellapark Art Forum.

Bogenhausen artists

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Art without Borders and Bounds



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Certainly, the Bogenhausen and Munich artists have been and still are in the highlights. Unforgettable are the exhibitions “Peasants, Citizens, Bytes, Barons” – “Bogenhausen in the Course of Time”, which was occasioned by the hundredth incorporation of Bogenhausen district into the Munich city (1992), then, the photographic documentation “Möhlstreet” (1997) and “Herzogpark” (2000) or “The Rubbish Pictures” of the Bogenhausen painter Eric Hanfstaengl (1996), which attracted visitors to the Arabellapark Art Forum in great numbers.

International Art and Events

Art and Events with International Flair

Intellectual and entertaining Programs:
... Dance...



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The exchange with foreign artists, of whom quite a lot are living temporarily or permanent in Munich, developed as particularly gratifying and is corresponding with the international oriented Arabellapark. Artists from Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brasil, Columbia, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Spain or Turkey have contributed to new views and new opinions. Thus, the Cuban photographer Alberto Korda, author of the worldwide famous portrait of Che Guevara (which can be seen in Wim Wenders' movie "Buena Vista Social Club"), was a true premiere, presented for the first time in Germany.

Intellectual and entertaining Programs: ... Music...



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The City Library and the Open University offers extensive exhibiting surfaces at the artists' disposal free of charge in the foyer and the library. Support is also given – if required – by printing posters and invitation cards, or taking over the mail charges and exhibition insurances; besides, they keep in touch with the press and look after the public relations. Last but not least, they attend to the organization of the art opening and take care of the opening speech. The artists income depends on the sale of their work and actually, most of them are far from being paid well.

Intellectual and entertaining Programs: ... Theatre...



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As it was to be expected, right from the beginning the art hanging on the walls led to an interaction with other artistic fields, such as literature, music, dance and theatre. As a result, intellectual and entertaining programs were being arranged.

Authors such as Carl Amery, Herbert Rosendorfer, “Bachmann”-prize-winner Reto Hännly from Switzerland, Alissa Walser, satirists and contemporary critics such as Jutta Ditfurth, Werner Schneyder or Ottfried Fischer, musicians and musical groups such as Modern String Quartet, Tango Mortale, Cesar Granados from Brasil, Enrique Ugarte from Spain or the rumba band “Havana Open” from Cuba left their mark on the Arabella Park Art Forum.

Cooperation

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Intellectual and entertaining Programs:
... Literature...



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Quite a lot could be achieved merely through teamwork with Bogenhausen associations, companies and initiatives (f.e. Culture and Fun Bogenhausen, the Arabella Bookshop, Hypovereinsbank, the District Committee, foreign cultural clubs such as Centro Cultural Latino-Americano, the German-Brazilian-Cultural-Union, the German-Cuban-Friendship-Association, galleries or committed artists, citizens or private individuals, such as the Munich Latin specialist Maria Sophia Blaas. Worth mentioning are also the Section for Cultural Affairs of Munich, particularly the departments for Foreign Culture, Third World and Engineering, which were constantly available with suggestions, support and technical assistance or equipment.

Cooperation Contract

Since 1995, the teamwork between the City Library and the Open University has been settled by contracts; these institutions go officially half-shares in costs, they offer technical equipment and personnel – although, the library is supporting most of it. The costs for fees, insurances and art openings amount to about 10.000 Euros yearly; the sum is decreased by the charge for admission.

All the other costs for staff, postage, printing and copies are included in the normal budget of the Library and Open University. In the meantime the Art Forum also disposes of its own logo, in which the elements of the institutes trademarks have been integrated.

Outcome

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Time to work and Time to celebrate
Anniversaries, Parties, Festivities

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More than a hundred exhibitions or rather art openings and two hundred events attracted in 15 years over 30.000 visitors, not counting regular visitors coming in between.

This does make one proud. There are not many cultural initiatives in Munich which have stood up the pace for so long.

This indicates how the vision about the lively, curiosity arousing culture of a district has been realized; it is a sign for the promoted open art for all, as well as a sign emphasizing the utmost creative teamwork of the City Library and the Open University, which is, in this form, unique in Munich.

To achieve success, but also to celebrate it, is the style of this house. Thus, on a Sunday, in November 98, 2.500 Munich citizens celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Bogenhausen cultural center. The festivity was attended by 60 artists from 18 countries and prominent personalities of the musical und literary scene. Worth mentioning: a special guest – professor Julian Nida-Rümelin, at that time recently elected to head of cultural affairs, provided the official stamp to the colourful festivity. The nine hour marathon party enjoyed a Caribbean buffet, sprinkled with champagne.

The Founders



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Never change a winning Team!

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Last but not least, a look at the „founders“ of the Arabellapark Art Forum. Right from the beginning I have been involved as initiator as well as chief librarian of the Bogenhausen Library together with my library team, whose commitment has been und is still essential and really mind-blowing. Not to forget the other colleagues, who have supported the Arabellapark Art Forum. For example Gerda Bauer-Goll, today art dealer in the Frankfurt area or Helga Blaha, at present head of the Open University Grünwald with her own Art Forum, and for some years Birgit Möller-Arnberg, employee und art expert in the East Subcenter of the Munich Open University.

Prospects

Craving for something else; the lively Library and the Open University without bounds and borders – this is the spiritual background of the Arabellapark Art Forum. And even if many people are proclaiming “Culture is dead”, will culture always be an essential part of our library.

But how promising is the future? Let’s say: it could be better. The city of Munich is more or less bankrupt, libraries are being closed down and courses of open universities are cancelled. What is to become of the Arabellapark Art Forum? In this respect, one is again reminded of the situation in the second half 2002. There was no more money and this year the budget did get cut by fifty per cent. What is left? A committed staff and artists ready to come forward without any fees and being satisfied with the entrance money hoping like us that after bad times better times will come again...

Hagen Meyer-Kröger
hagen.meyer-kroeger@muenchen.de