

STUDIO RAMBERG

Press Release

Last Dying Speech

Lars Ø. Ramberg

Park Elagin, St.Petersburg June 2nd 2011

*«Ideally, the voice of every single person should be heard»
President Dmitry Medvedev*

Last Dying Speech is a Site Specific, interactive installation by the Berlin based Norwegian artist Lars Ø Ramberg. It is designed for and presented in Park Elagin in St. Petersburg Russia, as part of the public Art Project **Critical Mass** curated by **Anna Bitkina** and the creative Association of Curators TOK.

The installation Last Dying Speech conceptually departs from the origin of the well-known Speakers Corner in Hyde Park London. Until 1783 close to the actual Speakers Corner the gallows of Tyburn were standing, where the condemned men got the chance to rise to speak the last time – with a «Last Dying Speech». All though London finally abandoned public executions the Speakers Corner survived.

Typically the speaker brings a little box to get a more exhibited position while speaking. Speakers embracing a multitude of political, social, sexual and religious causes, and no small number of eccentrics, meet at Speakers' Corner every Sunday. The site has hosted speeches by Albert Einstein, writer George Orwell and Vladimir Lenin, founder of the Soviet state.

Since 2009, after visiting Hyde Park in London, President Dmitry Medvedev has announced he would like to set aside a small area in central Moscow akin to London's "Speakers' Corner" where Russians can give free vent to their political ideas. "I need to speak with the Russian authorities and build our very own Hyde Park," Medvedev said. For Russians, the notion of Hyde Park is synonymous with Speakers' Corner. Medvedev's great vision has not convinced the parliament yet, meaning the Russians still haven't seen their own Speakers Corner being realized.

Ramberg's interactive installation is going to change that. Last Dying Speech is consisting of more than 200 individual wooden objects, identical to the soapboxes used in Hyde Park. Every box is burn-marked with Russian texts addressing the discourse of free speech itself, - stressing Russia as a young democracy with limited freedom of speech. The number of journalist registered being killed for raising their voice in public since the fall of Soviet Union has passed 200.

Last Dying Speech will become Russia's very first Speakers Corner. The cubic macro-shape of the installation will soon dissolve as the public is allowed to borrow the specially designed soapboxes to perform their own speech somewhere in the park. The monumental shape, the random use by the public will change the sculptural installation but also its surroundings. The final shape of the Artwork is therefore designed by the citizens themselves, both formally and by content since they are the speakers. They are bringing free individual statements into the public space.

The Norwegian installation artist Lars Ø. Ramberg seems to stir up controversy as regularly as he tends to make strong political statements through his work. And he does so with a sense of humour and a good grasp of the workings of modern media. As was the case when he repainted

French designed public toilets red, white, and blue to comment on the French revolution's influence on the Norwegian declaration of independence. Lars Ø Ramberg's works are typically large-scale projects relating to a social political context.

In 2005, he placed the word ZWEIFEL (German for DOUBT) in three-stories high neon letters on top of the former DDR parliament building «Palast der Republik» in Berlin. The Art project was engaging in 16 years of public debates regarding demolition plans of the East German parliament. The debates reflected complex challenges regarding the new German identity after reunification. After years of preparations Ramberg finally convinced the German Bundestag to realize his virtual institution «Palast des Zweifels» (Palace of Doubt). It suggested the half ruined building - as a permanent monument for the identity debate it self, and Doubt as the reunified Germanys cultural capital. In 2008 the building was demolished.

For further information or press material please contact

Ditteke Waidelich

studioramberg@aol.com

The Art Project Last Dying Speech is made possible with the generous support of Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs UD and Nordisk Ministerråd.

<http://dalje.com/en-world/russias-medvedev-wants-speakers-corner-in-moscow/251642>