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## PRESS RELEASE

**March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

### **Presentation of the conceptual proposal for the 2019 Leipzig Festival of Lights**

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing GmbH (LTM) met with the “Board of Trustees, Day of Peaceful Revolution 1989” (Kuratorium Tag der Friedlichen Revolution 1989) where they presented their proposal for the upcoming 2019 Leipzig Festival of Lights. The proposed concept was thoroughly discussed, ending with a vast majority backing the proposal. “I’m glad that the concept presented was convincing and I would like to thank the Board for the confidence shown. Now we can start implementing it together with the artist Victoria Coeln and in coordination with the local players of the art scene and also the civil rights movement. I am convinced that the Leipzig Festival of Lights on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution will mark the end of the day in an emotional and stirring way,” said Volker Bremer, Managing Director of Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing GmbH which is responsible for the realisation of the Leipzig Festival of Lights.

### **Key Elements of the Concept**

#### **Illuminated Spaces and the Leipzig Festival of Lights: The City Centre Ring Road as a Path of Light**

The concept, developed by Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing GmbH, in cooperation with the Viennese artist Victoria Coeln and the civil rights activist Gesine Oltmanns from Leipzig, adopts a participatory, light-based approach that envisages **illuminated spaces (Lichträume)**, a **path of light (Lichtweg)**, and **light studio (Lichtstudio)**. It will take place from September 4<sup>th</sup> to October 9<sup>th</sup>, spanning a period of five weeks.

In the run-up to October 9<sup>th</sup>, six **illuminated spaces (Lichträume)** will be created to mark the progression of the protestors of the Monday Demonstrations of 1989, which began at the St. Nicholas Church and further extended along the city center ring road, literally conquering more and more space. Starting on Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, the first space will be illuminated and each following Monday another space will be lit, with the progression of the light reflecting the progress of the events in 1989. Initially, the lights will unfold at places along the ring road,

mostly pointing “into these places”. On October 9<sup>th</sup>, the lights will encompass the entire ring road, transforming it into a path of light – “the ring of light”.

The illuminated spaces have been designed as participatory places of impulse. Each Monday the spaces will become the stage for citizens’ projects and performances. Both public participatory and artistic intervention are welcome. However, to meet the City Council’s request taken up by the Board that “The historical aspects of 1989 and their roots should be distinctively tangible in all events”, historian and former civil rights activist Gesine Oltmanns is working with LTM, addressing the historical content of this project. Oltmanns explains: “The autumn of 1989 was an awakening, a beginning of many things – driven by both courage and fear but full of optimism and hope. Shadow and light were always present at the time. The historical questions of those days still or again affect today’s society. I am greatly looking forward to the challenging task of making all of this visible within the context of the illuminated spaces and the Festival of Lights, shining a light on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution.”

Each illuminated space is assigned a particular theme based upon the concise demands and slogans of 1989, therefore, also adhering to the guidelines specified by the Board of Trustees.

### **Illuminated Spaces: Places, Times, Themes**

**Sept. 4<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday):** Illuminated space 1: St. Nicholas Church (interior) – “We are the people” (Wir sind das Volk!) and “Open to everyone” (Offen für alle)

**Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> (Monday):** Illuminated space 2: St. Nicholas Churchyard – “We want to get out!” (Wir wollen raus!) and “We are staying here!” (Wir bleiben hier)

**Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> (Monday):** Illuminated space 3: Schwanenteich – “Join us!” (Schließt euch an!)

**Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> (Monday):** Illuminated space 4: Runde Ecke – “No violence!” (Keine Gewalt!)

**Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> (Monday):** Illuminated space 5: Goerdeler monument at New City Hall – “Now or never – democracy” (Jetzt oder nie – Demokratie)

**Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> (Monday):** Illuminated space 6: Schillerpark (Lenné Park) – “For an open country with free people” (Für ein offenes Land mit freien Menschen)

### **2019 Leipzig Festival of Lights:**

**Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday: Day of Peaceful Revolution):** Leipzig Festival of Lights – “The Autumn of 1989 – The Dawn of Democracy” (Herbst 89 – Aufbruch zur Demokratie)

The transformation of the entire city center ring road into a path of light, a ring light, will mark the conclusion and highlight at the same time. In addition to the illuminated spaces that will have been created, the entire historic route of the

demonstrations will also be lit. To implement this, artist Victoria Coeln will use an expressive and diverse picture-based language.

Coeln's visual conception concentrates on four essential elements: rasters, light lines, coloured surfaces, and light and shadow projections of the citizens of Leipzig. Rasters will be projected in and onto thematically relevant buildings in advance, photographed, transferred onto glass, and finally projected back into public spaces, referring to the historic places of 1989. Light lines will be precisely fitted into parks, onto facades and in city spaces. They represent the countless invisible footsteps left by the thousands of demonstrators who took to the streets. The coloured surfaces reflect the multi-chromacity and diversity within every society. They create playful and poetic spaces that are well suited for photographic experiments and other participatory practices. On October 9<sup>th</sup>, the pre-produced projected images of the local citizens will merge with the new polychrome, fugitive shadows of the attendees of the Festival. These images will be created in advance at the Light Studio.

### **The Light Studio – A Preliminary Project** (scheduled to start in May 2019)

The Light Studio is an additional participatory concept designed to involve contemporary witnesses and urban society. A location in Leipzig, (currently planned to take place at the Museum of Fine Arts) will be set up as a Light Studio to produce pictorial images. The focus of the production will be on interviews with historical witnesses. These will be photographed, filmed and processed within different light environments; kaleidoscopic shadows and movements. Consequently, part of the content of the large-scale projections is created, which will overwrite facades at the Leipzig Festival of Lights, becoming an essential element for participation. The area surrounding the Light Studio could also lend itself to conversations and round table discussions that may give further impetus as to content and communicate the project as early as from May on.

The artist Victoria Coeln thanked the Board for the confidence shown in her approach and emphasized: "In all of my projects there has been one central experience: Light makes people shine! It is my wish that light on October 9<sup>th</sup> will be a means to an end and that the shining glow in the eyes of the participants will become the actual Festival of Lights. The language of light provides the great possibility to combine threatening sensations, shadows, a certain blurred effect with brightness, warmth, hopefulness, and the ability to express antagonisms and tensions. This is my approach to artistically reflect the situation of 1989. In this way the ambivalence of memory can become visible."

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, the traditional "Kerzen-89" (illuminated "89" lettering filled with thousands of candles) will be set up at the Augustusplatz, expended by the lettering "LEIPZIG" which will be filled with candles by the Festival visitors as well.

**Images** (published free of charge when displayed with author's name)

1. Example of raster projection (Michaeler Gate of Hofburg, Vienna)  
File: "AtelierCoeln\_DystopiaEutopia\_08"  
Photo credit: Helmut Prochart
2. Example of organic light lines  
File: "VictoriaCoeln\_LICHTSPUREN-inSeestadtAspern-Wien2018 001" \_75  
Photo credit: Atelier Coeln
3. Example of coloured areas  
File: "VictoriaCoeln\_Stadtpark\_IMG\_0769"  
Photo credit: Atelier Coeln
4. Example of Shadow Projection  
File: StudioVisits\_AtelierVictoriaCoeln-08\_IMG\_20181210\_105418  
Photo credit: Atelier Coeln
5. Portrait of Victoria Coeln  
File:  
"fotohelpro\_20140226\_portraitvictoriacoeln\_fotohelmutprochartpro\_3407"  
Photo credit: Helmut Prochart

### **Artist's Biography - Victoria Coeln**

1962 born in Vienna, Austria, 2 daughters

1981-1985 diploma student of the Master Class for Stage Design under the tutelage of Lois Egg and Erich Wonder at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna

Studied mathematics at the University of Vienna and TU Vienna.

1992 Commenced artistic activities

*"I work with light because it gives me the greatest level of freedom: the freedom to explore, expand and transcend my own limits."* (Victoria Coeln)

Victoria Coeln works internationally, mostly on-site. With her chromotopic light, Coeln constructs latent bodies of light with permeable, eternally open borders, which are manifested in pictorial spaces, in both interior and exterior spaces. Her partially dialogical and chromotopic work deals with perception in spatial and temporal dimensions, creates new associations, and triggers unexpected resonances. Interdisciplinary discussions with Coeln and experts from other fields of art, philosophy, theology, science and politics are largely an integral part of her individual works.

The diversity of her works ranges from site-specific projects in public spaces - in urban and rural, secular and sacred places - to smaller works in pictorial spaces.

Victoria Coeln views her work as art-based research. Her chromotopes are spaces of awareness and laboratories that pose questions to art, philosophy, theology, science and politics as well as to the general public and enter into dialogues and polylogues with people of all generations and cultures.

For more information about Victoria Coeln and her works, please visit: [www.coeln.at](http://www.coeln.at)

## **Background**

### **What is the significance of September 4<sup>th</sup> and why does the project start on that particular day?**

The first illuminated space will be lit on this date because September 4<sup>th</sup> marks a historical day in the series of protests:

After the summer break of 1989, starting on September 4<sup>th</sup>, regular demonstrations and other protests requesting a permit to leave the German Democratic Republic permanently to the Federal Republic of Germany were resumed following the prayers for peace.

On Monday, during the Leipzig Autumn Fair, a demonstration was held in the square, in front of the St. Nicholas Church by members of the local action groups carrying large banners that read, among others, "For an open country with free people." Within moments of displaying a banner, young men in civil clothing grabbed the banners. The crowd then responded by shouting: "Stasi raus" (Stasi out).

These actions were filmed by Western journalists and broadcast to the entire world.

On this evening, the slogan "we are staying here" was coined. The existing barrier between those demonstrators wanting to leave the county ("we want to get out") and those who wanted to stay, no longer existed. The following Monday, they took to the streets to demonstrate together, unified in the quest for change, despite their different motivations.

Source: [www.Herbst89.de](http://www.Herbst89.de)