

## **P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

### **NEDKO SOLAKOV** **Emotions (without masks)**

**July 12 – November 1, 2009**  
**Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt**

At the latest since his participation in the 2007 Venice Biennial and documenta 12 Nedko Solakov's work has been at the forefront of contemporary art. The Bulgarian contemporary artist, who was born in 1957, is a gifted storyteller and a commentator of art and today's world. His work is as humorous as it is dramatic: It offers an animated realization of existential human themes, be it fears, hopes or aggressions. Examples are the two of his main works, „99 Fears“ (2006-07) and „Top Secret“ (1989-90), which can be seen in Darmstadt.

“At Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt, Nedko Solakov has used all his talents for a special kind of ‘friendly takeover’”, says Director Dr. Ralf Beil, explaining the exhibition concept. The total installation “Emotions (without masks)” is arranged over the complex, dramatically illuminated exhibition architecture of the previous exhibition “Masks. Metamorphoses of the Face”: “Thus a new butterfly of art with its own individual coloring unexpectedly emerges from the discarded cocoon of the past masks exhibition.”

“Emotions (without masks)” – this means the feelings to which Solakov openly gives free reign here as well as the unmasked museum in the double sense: the empty space of the previous exhibition, in which Solakov's devilish and cheerful masquerades now take place. Tiny figures and handwritten notations populate the empty spaces. Nedko Solakov has created a total artwork that alternates between dream and reality, challenging our view of art and life with absurd micro-stories and tragicomic thought impulses.

From July 12 until November 1, 2009 the Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt thus hosts one of the strangest and most fascinating projects in contemporary art this summer. The public can follow the artist's traces in both Mathildenhöhe's historical exhibition building and the water reservoir below. The “Emotions (without masks)” show crowns Solakov's major exhibition tour, organized by Institut Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt together with the Kunstmuseum Bonn and the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen.

The “Emotions” book accompanying the exhibition, published by Hatje Cantz Verlag, contains essays by Ralf Beil, Stephan Berg, Konrad Bitterli, Georgi Gospodinov and Nedko Solakov. Bound, 224 pages, 196 illustrations, 19.7 x 26.7 cm. Priced € 30 at the exhibition and € 34 in shops.

The large program of events, lectures, educational days and film screenings is available at [www.mathildenhoehe.eu](http://www.mathildenhoehe.eu).

## **Nedko Solakov. Emotions (without masks)**

### **Further information on the artist's work**

Having started by studying mural painting at the Academy of Art in Sofia, Nedko Solakov has developed in the last 25 years an oeuvre which is as humorous as it is playful, and as biting as it is melancholic, an oeuvre that fundamentally questions the validity of every system of representation.

Across the diverse forms of his work, Solakov aims for an encyclopedia of the absurd and outlandish, a history of deviations, differences, embarrassments and failed utopias. The collapse of the communist system in the late 1980s proves to be a shaping experience and at the same time signals the start of the search for a new, personal language, which can be used to adequately express the complexity and fragility of reality. "Top Secret" (1989/90), consisting of an index box, filled with a series of cards detailing the artist's youthful collaboration with the Bulgarian state security, impressively highlights the artist's technique, which is both provocative and undermines every certainty. His drawings, essays, videos, photographs, performances, installations, sculptures and murals scratch at the paint of apparent collective truths, question the conditions of the art system and market ("A (not so) White Cube", 2001 / "Leftovers", 2005), reflect on failure as a metaphor for human existence by openly stating the artist's own fears ("Fear", 2002/03 / "Fears", 2006/07) and in the ways of politics discover paradox as a dominating structure ("Announcement", 1999 / "Discussion (Property)", 2007). Solakov's ability to tell all of these different topics in the form of stories, that maintain a precise balance between a poetic, rhapsodic enjoyment in narration and continuous, ironic interruptions, makes this work not only completely unmistakable, but also extremely entertaining and humorous.

### **Biographical elements**

Nedko Solakov (born in 1957 in the town of Cherven Briag, currently living in Sofia) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts Sofia in 1981 and started to work mainly in the field of painting. Ever since the early 1990's he has been part of the world art scene contributing his trademark drawings, installations, videos, objects and site-specific interventions.

Nedko Solakov has participated in La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (1993, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2007), the Istanbul Biennial (1992, 1995, 2005), the São Paulo Biennial (1994), Manifesta 1 (Rotterdam, 1996), the Gwangju Biennial, South Korea (1997, 2002), the Lyon Biennial (2000), the Seville Biennial, Spain (2006), the Moscow Biennial (2007), Documenta 12, Kassel (2007), the Sydney Biennial (2008) and the New Orleans Biennial (2008). Over the last ten years he has had solo exhibitions at the Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid, De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam, Kunsthaus Zurich and Castello di Rivoli, Turin. From 2003 to 2005 the Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö, Sweden, the Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art Contemporain, Luxembourg and O.K. Centrum für Gegenwartskunst, Linz, Austria hosted a first large retrospective exhibition entitled "Nedko Solakov. A 12 1/3 (and even more) Year Survey". Currently the extensive thematic solo exhibition „Emotions” starting in Kunstmuseum Bonn and continuing in Kunstmuseum St. Gallen is presented at Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt - radically changed into "Emotions (without masks)".

## Nedko Solakov. Emotions (without masks)

### Information

#### Curator

Dr. Ralf Beil, Director Institut Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt

#### Stations of the exhibition

Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt: July 12 till November 1, 2009

Kunstmuseum St. Gallen: February 28 till May 10, 2009

Kunstmuseum Bonn: September 20 till November 16, 2008

#### Admission

8 € | 6 € reduced; family-card: 16 € (two adults with children)

#### Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday 10 am – 6 pm; Thursday 10 am – 9 pm

#### Public guided tours

Thursday 6.30 pm; Sunday 11 am and 3 pm

#### Individual guided tours in German, English, French or Russian

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#### Homepages

[www.mathildenhoehe.eu](http://www.mathildenhoehe.eu)

There will soon be a film about the show available on the website

[www.nedkosolakov.net](http://www.nedkosolakov.net)

#### Sponsored by:



#### Presscontact

Gwendolin Ross and Lina Ophoven

This press release and printable **press images** on the exhibition can be found in the Press Section of our homepage at [www.mathildenhoehe.info/www/presse.html](http://www.mathildenhoehe.info/www/presse.html). We would be pleased to help you with briefings and interviews in connection with the exhibition. Should you require further information on this or other topics please contact us on +49 (0) 6151 13 37 38 or at [presse.mathildenhoehe@darmstadt.de](mailto:presse.mathildenhoehe@darmstadt.de).