

## **Stephanie Zeiler (by herself),**

34, artist and freelancer.

"Growing up in Sauerland (something less than a village) – there had been only ten houses, surrounded by a forest at one side and a highway to the other. There are no shops, no church, only one letter box – I had no real idea of cities since I turned nine years old. Dogs, cows, chickens elder neighbour kids, playing in nature and painting had been the most important parts of my childhood. But after my father died, everything changed and my life as a nomad started.

In 1986 my mother, my brother and me moved to a town in the urban area of the Ruhr: Hagen. As I didn't like it very much, I left immediately after I graduated High school to travel through Europe, America and Africa. I have lived in Düsseldorf, Asunción, Berlin, Luxemburg and since four and a half years I am based in Cologne.

All those towns were offering something special to me. In Hagen I found a second grandfather, learned a lot about working classes and, going to a catholic church, about Christianity. In Düsseldorf I got to know the business world. Following the dream of my grandfather in Düsseldorf, it was the town I learned about being a journalist. In Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, I experienced a lot hospitality, frugality but also racism, corruption and religious borders.

In Berlin I was involved in political activism and (performance) art. In Luxemburg I was confronted with a small state by having only 250.000 inhabitants but still three languages: Luxemburgish, French and German. Last but not least Cologne connected me with TV and music. First I started to listen to electronic music, later on I started to learn the bandoneón, a German instrument that traditionally had been played by the coal mine workers, but nowadays is rather known as part of the tango.

Although I never felt in love with Cologne, there are things I really love here: living close to the Rhine River, having museums like the Rautenstrauch-Joest and the Kolumba – especially the room with the gold wall – cycling through the streets, going to open air parties and having a beer from a kiosk with all those wonderful friends I found here."



## Stephanie Zeiler (by CAT)

Stephanie wurde gegen Mitte des Projektes Teil der Künstlergruppe. Während sie den ersten Art-Dinners als Helferin beiwohnte, verfolgte sie die Gesprächsthemen und entwickelte daraus die Idee zu einem eigenen Beitrag: „Nachbar(s) Taube“. Den Künstlern gefiel das Projekt und so wurde sie Teil der Gruppe.

Ihre „Brieftauben“ sind verschiedenen Hintergründen entlehnt:

Tauben prägen das Bild städtischer Plätze. Manchmal werden sie von Passanten gefüttert (trotz der Verbote), verjagt oder aber, wie meistens, gar nicht wahrgenommen. Der Umgang mit ihnen ähnelt in vielem dem Zusammenleben mit unseren Nachbarn, die einfach da sind, über die wir uns vielleicht mal ärgern, mit denen wir außer dem Beieinanderwohnen aber zumeist wenig teilen und die wir kaum kennen. Stephanie verbrachte zwei volle Wochen damit, Passanten in Köln anzusprechen und über das Thema der Tauben, auf die eigenen Nachbarn zu kommen. Über 50 Menschen haben sie so in ihre Treppenhäuser geführt. Dort entstanden Fotos, die zwar menschenleere Aufnahmen darstellen doch zugleich auch das nebeneinander Wohnen zeigen und Geschichten und Begegnungen erahnen lassen. Jeder, den die Künstlerin begleitete, faltete außerdem eine Brieftaube und beschrieb diese mit einer Nachricht für einen seiner bislang weitgehend unbekanntes Nachbarn. Die Form der Origami-Taube erinnert an gefaltete Flugzeuge die in der Grundschule, mit kleinen Nachrichten versehen, von einer Bank zur anderen segeln. Während der Ausstellung entstanden weitere solcher Brieftauben, die dort mit Hilfe eines Telefonbuches an Kölner geschickt werden konnten.

Stephanie recherchierte zum Thema „Taube“ und besuchte einen Brieftaubenschlag mitten im Zentrum von Köln, wo sie zudem Tonaufnahmen machte. Informationen und eine CD mit den Taubengeräuschen gab sie den Ausstellungsbesuchern mit auf ihren Weg.

*Stephanie became a definite member of the group at around the middle of the project. While she already joined the first dinners as support she followed the topics and elaborated her own contribution : "Neighbour(s) Pigeon". The others liked her project and thus she joined the group.*

*Her "carrier pigeons" derive from different backgrounds:*

*Pigeons shape the look of urban places. Sometimes they are fed by pedestrians (despite interdictions), chased away or, as most often, they are not noticed at all. The contact with them resembles in many way the cohabitation with our neighbours who are just there, who we sometimes get angry about but who we don't really know anything about except for the fact that they live next to us. Stephanie spent two weeks talking to pedestrians in Cologne about the subject of pigeons in order to consequently shift to talking about their own neighbours. More than 50 people agreed to take her into their staircases where Stephanie took photos that portray situations empty of people but at the same time the living next to each other and that lead to imagining possible stories and encounters. Each person that was accompanied by Stephanie also folded a carrier pigeon and wrote a note for his or her unknown neighbour on this. The shape of this origami pigeon reminds one of the airplanes that were folded and tagged with messages in elementary school in order to glide to the neighbour's table. During the exhibition more of these carrier pigeons were made by visitors and sent to inhabitants of Cologne with a telephone book as auxiliary means.*

*Further to this Stephanie researched on the topic "pigeon" and visited a pigeonry in the center of Cologne where she made audio recordings. Written information and a CD with the pigeon noises were given to visitors of the exhibition.*