

PRESS RELEASE

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OPENING Manifesta 4

May 24, 2002 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

The **International Foundation Manifesta** and the Members of its Board Francesco Bonami, Chris Dercon, Martin Fritz, Maaretta Jaukkuri, Kasper König, Vasif Kortun, Henry Meyric Hughes (President), Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Vicente Todoli, Barbara Vanderlinden and Igor Zabel congratulate the city of Frankfurt am Main, Germany, on the festive opening of the fourth edition of Manifesta, European Biennial of Contemporary Art.

GENERAL

Manifesta is a European biennial for visual artists, first conceived in the early 1990s by the former Netherlands Office for Fine Arts. In the course of the last six years, this peripatetic biennial has moved from the place of its birth, Rotterdam (1996), to Luxembourg (1998), Ljubljana (2000) and now Frankfurt am Main, where the 4th biennial exhibition opens on 24 May. In its short history, Manifesta has introduced new audiences to contemporary artistic practice from all over Europe and given an opportunity to a total of some 270 artists and 15 curators of working together with a wide variety of institutions and individuals, in a climate of experimentation and mutual respect.

MANIFESTA IN FRANKFURT

Manifesta is conceived as a nomadic event, whose aim is to stimulate a dialogue between artists and audiences in different parts of Europe. It provides a platform for young and emerging artists from different backgrounds and an opportunity for them to respond to the changing social, political, economic and cultural scene. At the same time, it offers young curators, working in collaboration with local and external production teams, to experiment with innovative ways of working and communicating with the public. By changing location every two years, Manifesta is compelled each time to take stock of new realities and enter into dialogue with a new set of partners. It operates as an open-ended network and places special emphasis on the value of collaboration and interactive communication between artists and professionals from all over Europe.

Frankfurt successfully competed to stage Manifesta 4 two years ago, at an important moment in its own economic and cultural development. Emerging from a lengthy period of relative stagnation, after the heady, expansionist period of the 1980s, a new generation of young, internationally orientated cultural managers was taking on the challenge of relaunching the city's cultural image and breathing fresh life into its institutions. Manifesta, with its independent outlook, its pan-European mission and its expanding network of contacts fitted well into the rapidly evolving local situation. The strong combination of an outside team of curators and a city-based management, working in close association with local institutions has created an ideal context for the realisation of Manifesta 4, with the direct participation of some 91 artists, theoreticians and curators from over thirty countries in Europe.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The opening of Manifesta 4 presents the **International Foundation Manifesta (IFM)**, the umbrella organisation Manifesta, as a whole, with an appropriate moment for reflection. With the prospect in sight of a major three-year subsidy from the European Commission's 'Culture 2000' programme, the IFM will be able to divert some of its attention from its recurrent existential concerns to developing middle- to long-term strategies for the expansion of its international network and the strengthening of its biennial programmes of artistic events. Given the rapid growth in international biennials of recent years, the IFM will not aim to increase the scale or cultural marketing of its activities, but will concentrate instead on consolidating its individual position, as a nomadic event and build on its already extensive international network of collaborative partnerships. At the same time as developing a more permanent, lightweight organisational structure, streamlining its organisational procedures and striving for still greater transparency in its dealings with artists and clients, the IFM will work hard to find ways of preserving the youthfulness, dynamism and innovation for which Manifesta has justly become known.

Concretely, the IFM has opened itself up to a form of collegiate membership for past curators and Board members, who may wish to remain in active dialogue with the existing team. At the same time, it plans to establish new categories of honorary or associate membership and offer opportunities patronage to individuals and organisations seeking to become more closely involved in its future development. New collaborative projects include the production of a book, analysing and documenting Manifesta's evolution; the launching of an international journal for contemporary critical thought; organisation of a series of nomadic workshops for professionals; institutionalisation of an occasional programme of public debates; and, finally, the development of the IFM's website, alongside digitalisation of the ever-growing Manifesta Archive and information resource. These many and diverse activities, which will place a special emphasis on interactivity and interdisciplinary research, are planned in the full awareness that Manifesta, and its parent body, the IFM, can only survive through a process of organic evolution and critical self-examination.

For further details regarding the **International Foundation Manifesta**, please contact:

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