

Basically yes. But it looks better.

A bit more than two years ago, a process began within the NGBK: Does what we do really look like what we show to the public? Is the self-presentation of the only grassroots art society far and wide adequate, when we continue to rely on the codes of the anarchical and nonconformity as if we were still living in the societies of discipline of high Fordism, in a time when the world was obstructed with prohibition signs and commands; as if individualistic and cheeky enthusiasm and identification had not long normatively entered into deregulated professional life, the way it has into consumption and lifestyle culture long ago. We wanted to know how we could square the circle: on the one hand, to represent the non-hierarchical grassroots diversity of the art society and, on the other, make it clear with uniform and recognisable elements that what the NGBK is artistically and politically concerned with is not arbitrary and consumerist. We decided to expose ourselves to the question raised by an imaginary benevolent public that is not, however, entirely up-to-date on us: “Are they (still) doing the same?” That was the name we gave to an exhibition/event during which we “tested our ability to communicate”.

We asked a number of artists and designers to show us how, in their view, the NGBK could be represented, not only to improve our communicative skills, but also to learn more about ourselves in this manner: anschlaege.de, C-D-A-P, Michael Dreyer, Achim Lengerer, Michael Schirner/Schirner Zang Institute and Suse Weber made extremely inspiring, far-reaching contributions that were often more similar to a visual-artistic analysis of the NGBK, its image, its potential and its history than to a campaign: That’s exactly what we wanted.

A group of internal and external experts dealt with the proposals and sought to isolate individual measures from the them that could be implemented. The person they selected to do this is Michael Dreyer, whose suggestions met a very positive response in the art society and beyond. Dreyer agreed to develop a new representation concept for the NGBK based on his ideas and several other proposals. We are very much intrigued by it because it combines very fundamental and yet original assessments of the NGBK and its role in the history of (political) art since more than 40 years with equally practical and intelligent recommendations for our daily activities: for posters, catalogues, letterheads and signs in public space.

One of Dreyer’s central ideas is the description of the NGBK as an academy. Nowhere else do such complex and lengthy discussion and realisation processes take place, in which so many persons participate under often experimental conditions. The amount of text of the written project applications that are copied and distributed to the members alone exceeds the amount of data of a medium-size, theory publishing house. This concentration and density of the joint work regarding the projects realised under grassroots conditions is the major exceptional feature to which Dreyer refers in his drafts.

In particular, he wants to highlight both “neue Gesellschaft” and “bildende Kunst” as independent modules of the society’s name by using lowercase adjectives: It is about bildende Kunst (fine art) with a lowercase b, not about the untouchable institution of bourgeois society, and it is about its relationship to a neue Gesellschaft (new society).

In our view, the circle has indeed been squared. The NGBK – now nGbK – thus presents itself soberly and open for debate to a changing art environment, an heated and confusing political situation, a different Kreuzberg and its new residents. It retains the continuity of critical and grassroots processes by sharpening their contours against the contemporary backdrop. In this sense, we are still doing the same, but it looks better. That means: You can recognise us.

Save the Date:

20 September, 2013, 5 – 7 pm

87 Semester

Kick off with Michael Dreyer, Diedrich Diederichsen a.o.