



Light installation | neon light, neon sign transformer, neon sign accessories and equipment | 2023 – 2024

The light installation “*DON't Dream Dreams*” starts from the celebrated and offensive advice that Lord David Owen gave to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1992, during his visit to Sarajevo which endured 1425 days of the siege.

“Don't, don't, don't live under this dream that the West is going to come in and sort this problem out. Don't dream dreams...” declared Lord David Owen, a British politician and diplomat who was a European Union Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia between 1992 and 1995.

Due to wars and other forms of violence, many people have been forced to migrate and seek refuge. Among them are refugees from Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine who have arrived in the European Union, Austria, and Vienna, hoping to find safety and a better life. They will soon encounter the harsh reality of the strict immigration policies and negative attitudes towards immigration processes that prevail in Fortress Europe.

Nearly 42% of people living in Vienna are of non-Austrian origin. According to official data from 2020, in the Ottakring district where the work is installed, around 30% of the population consists of nationalities from various countries, and around 12% of the population is from post-Yugoslav space.

Viennese communities from this geopolitical area have a personal and historical relation to the statement "Don't Dream Dreams".

However, the gloomy universality of this defeatist statement surpasses this particular geographic space, and its message, unfortunately, still reaches people from different zones of conflict and exhausted geographies today.

Due to migration processes, cultural milieu and diversity have become signifiers of the 16th Viennese district. The multiculturalism, coexistence and plurality of voices are perhaps its strongest trump. The history of Ottakring and its citizens is deeply embedded and written all over the urban landscape of the district.

The light installation "*DON't Dream Dreams*" commissioned and realized in the context of the Brunnenpassage initiative- Bunker 16 Artists in Residence Programme in cooperation with KUNSTHALLE Wien, consists of the large-scale neon inscription installation, displayed in the Brunnenpassage located at Ottakring's Yppenplatz. Underneath the Yppenplatz, on Vienna's Brunnenmarkt, a 500 m2 protective bunker from the Second World War lies hidden.

The bunker weaves in and out of its physical into symbolic existence. The bunker, though physically concealed, symbolizes shelter, survival, hope, and dreams of a safer future. The metaphor of the bunker as a material and a psychological site has a dichotomous meaning that brings ambiguity to such a kind of public property.

The installation "*DON't Dream Dreams*" aims to bring what is hidden underground and in the subconscious mind and expose it to the overground and conscious mind, utilizing light as a potent symbol and the essential elements of the artwork. Besides, the work tackles Sigmund Freud's interpretation of Dreams and the subconscious and uses it to trigger the consciousness of the Real.

The neon sign's flickering light alternates between "Don't Dream Dreams" and "Do Dream Dreams," providing a visual dynamic that shifts between discouragement and encouragement. The blue neon light, representing the colour of the European emblem, adds another dimension to the installation, reflecting on the contemporary meaning of the EU.

The large-scale neon installation "*DON't Dream Dreams*" honours the strength of the Viennese inhabitants with a migratory background and their stories. It is a homage to the human spirit, the strength of the will, lust for life, belief, and dreams and a powerful reminder of the human spirit's resilience and the enduring power of dreams in the face of adversity.

Besides the strong relevance to the current political and social context, one of the many facets of this work lies in its mediational and enlightening quality.

The installation encourages viewers to reflect on these issues and engage in meaningful dialogue, contributing to a broader societal discourse on migration, refuge, and dreams.