

berlin kudamm

artotel



w. vostell exhibition



## wolf vostell

art'otel berlin kudamm – opened in 1989 and expanded in 1996 – is dedicated to wolf vostell, the scandalous pioneer of the environment, happening and fluxus movement, and it is exhibiting one of the largest collections of his inexhaustible creative power in a permanent museum-like exhibition extending from the basement to the top floor of the building. following vostell's motto, "art is life; life is art", 200 of his works have found their way into the rooms, the corridors, and the conference rooms, and the artist himself assisted during the installation of his large sculpture diskobol on the roof of the building. vostell's rebellious genius continues to live in the rooms of the hotel.

### artist background

born in 1932 in leverkusen, wolf vostell studied at the école nationale supérieure des beaux arts in paris in 1955 and 1956, and he attended the art academy in düsseldorf after finishing an apprenticeship in photolithography. following the traditions in artistic methods of the 1950s that integrated non-pictorial materials such as newspaper clippings, wood pieces and waste tin into a picture in the form of a collage or assemblage, vostell's works contained cement (the quintessential construction material of the 20th century), tv monitors, and even hand grenades, tearing down the borders between art and life. vostell continued this line of thought in his "environments". he structured space using the everyday objects of life, which took on new meaning in these compositions. the "happenings" added a temporal dimension, and the spectator became an actor in the choreography initiated by the artist. after completing his study of art in paris, vostell staged the first "happening" in europe in 1958. as a founding member of fluxus, in 1962 vostell not only laid the basis for the "expansion of art" to life, but also the foundation for overcoming the classical boundaries of genres. he incorporated sounds, music, video, and the expressive forms of the fine arts into his happenings. vostell's subject was the present, the reality surrounding us that was and still is characterised by absurdities, destruction and continuous threats. he was witness and observer of the grey post-bellum period of berlin, for him a symbol of violence and brutality. vostell incorporated catastrophes relentlessly appearing in the news on television into his material pictures using tv monitors, leaving the viewer to make sense of the chaos of the world in the juxtaposition of contradictions.

### art in the hotel

the picture of the wall in the lobby depicts the often recurring motif of the berlin wall, represented true to life with steel-framed cement and tv monitors. his so-called event picture in the breakfast room of the hotel, the fall of the berlin wall nr. 12 from 1990, is dedicated to the fall of the berlin wall that brutally separated people for decades. in addition to the paintings vostell also developed the art form dé-collage. the term has connotations of the take-off of a plane, the ungluing of things stuck together, and death, and it describes vostell's technique of tearing apart posters stuck next to or on top of one another to the point where contradictory motifs and fragments come to light. you will find dé-coll/ages throughout the hotel, and every floor is also equipped with a recessed display case showing a material picture related to berlin, in the form of jet planes or hand grenades floating over the city's famous landmarks. often in collaboration with musicians, vostell planned, choreographed and documented his happenings in collage-like handwritten texts and drawings, signed with his unique signature, a stroke from the right to the left. the score for the concert le cri – the largest musical sculpture to date at the gallerie lavignes in paris in 1990 – can be found on the second and seventh floor of the hotel. between them you can see vorstell's thematic areas in ever new variations: the brandenburg gates, cars, female bodies, and the turtle, a rusty locomotive turned on its back – a symbol of the outmoded technology of war. the latter is vostell's largest sculpture of the year 1993, now located in marl, germany. vostell died in 1998, leaving behind a still very contemporary oeuvre that, through its relevance, never ceases to stir up old memories. at the bar you can enjoy the company of vostell's small, smoothly burnished sculptures, reminiscent of antique sculptures like the discus thrower or a graceful female torso and yet modernised in vostell's manner with tv monitors.

total numbers of artworks: 578

best known artworks: the berlin wall, the fall of the berlin wall, happening: le cri, paris 1990

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