

# GERMAN REVIEW ON THE UNITED NATIONS | Abstracts

VOLUME 62 | 2014 | No. 4

## The UN and Art

Ian Williams

pp. 147–151

### Elephants, Fishes and Saint George.

The UN's Art Collection Reflect the World »Warts and All«

That there is a potential contradiction between politics and art can be thoroughly studied at UN Headquarters in New York. Sculptures, tapestries, paintings and other objects of varying quality are exhibited there. They were gifted to the UN by its Member States over the past 69 years and sometimes threatened to turn the UN building into a global kitsch center. This article portrays some of the art works, for example, the Soviet sculpture ›Swords into Ploughshares‹ or the knotted revolver, as some of the most popular works, because of their clear messages. It also presents art works that would readily be accepted by renowned museums in the world, for instance, Chagall's stained glass window or Hepworth's ›Single Form‹. Lastly, the article tells the story behind some of the more bizarre pieces, like a cast elephant and a rotten fish, and explains the often difficult diplomacy applied by UN officials in managing the gifts.

### »We Are Not a Museum«

pp. 152–155

In this interview **Michael Adlerstein**, Executive Director of the Capital Master Plan (CMP), explains the United Nations arts policy, the work of the UN Arts Committee and how the art collection at United Nations Headquarters in New York is maintained, financed and (sort of) curated.

Maria Veie Sandvik

pp. 156–162

### Iconology of a New World Order.

Per Krohg's Painting in the United Nations Security Council

The untitled painting in the UN Security Council chamber in New York is well-known from the news. It features scenes in which humanity pulls itself out of war and misery and climbs toward productive harmony—a rising phoenix at its centerpiece. But what was the Norwegian artist's intention and how did the painting come into being? This article offers answers to these questions by combining different elements: Not only does it give an overview of Krohg's work and personal background; it also describes the political circumstances and UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie's role regarding the decoration of the chamber. In addition, the article provides an extensive iconographic analysis and interpretation of the different ele-

ments of the painting. In combining the analysis with the artist's personal background the author provides interesting insights into Krohg's world view.

Boris Abel

pp. 163–168

### »UNconventional Ways«.

The United Nations as Subject of Contemporary Visual Art

Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, attached special meaning to art and saw it as a source of inspiration for politics. But is there a connection between contemporary visual art and the United Nations at all? If so, in what way? These questions were discussed, among others, as part of the art project ›United Nations Revisited—Artistic Interventions in Political Space‹, organized by the German artist and curator Signe Theill in Berlin in 2013. The article, which includes an interview with Signe Theill, tries to analyze whether and how contemporary visual artists, e.g., Alfredo Jaar, Goshka Macuga, Alfred Banze or Marina Abramović, deal with the United Nations today. The author concludes that most artists have a somehow fatalistic view of the organization, thinking that—while being indispensable—it does not live up to its expectations and should do better.

Kira Tazsman

pp. 169–174

### Savior of the World, Smurf or Deadbeat?

The United Nations' Portrayal in Movies

What are the United Nations—guardians of world peace, harmless blue helmeted creatures or just a bunch of losers? In feature films of the last twenty years, the portrayal of the UN is often less flattering. Their good intentions are not at stake. However, it is the practical failures of peacekeeping missions or the UN representatives' crisis managements in post-war territories that are criticized in cinema based on historical facts. Movies such as ›Hotel Rwanda‹, ›No Man's Land‹ or ›The Whistleblower‹ frequently recount, how blue helmets did not intervene in situations where the lives of many people were obviously in danger, because their orders would not permit it. In these films, outstanding individuals fight a lonely war against a passive UN jurisdiction or risk their lives in the face of blood-thirsty enemies—more or less successfully. Only in action adventure movies do the UN come across as saviors of the universe.