

**PRESS INFORMATION****Jana Gunstheimer****“I’m a pig. Canonise me.”****24 July – 12 September 2010****Opening: Friday, 23 July 2010, 7 pm**

Speakers at the exhibition opening:

Dr. Thomas Juen, Head of the Department for Cultural Affairs, Government of Tyrol

Dr. Beate Ermacora, Director of Galerie im Taxispalais

**Exhibition discussion: Saturday, 24 July 2010, 11 am**

Jana Gunstheimer in conversation with Beate Ermacora

Jana Gunstheimer creates parallel worlds and makes mockery of social conditions using the style of docu-fiction. In the conflict area of reality soaps like Big Brother and social measures of surveillance and discipline, these seem uncanny and even frightening, but certainly not impossible. It is no longer easy to distinguish reality and fiction in her work.

The internationally operating, bogus company *Nova Porta* fabricated by Gunstheimer devises measures to deal with risks. “We are everywhere”, “Destruction is creation”, “When capitalist society begins to boil, the scum will float on top” or “People need severity” are some of the slogans with which *Nova Porta* operates. In addition, quotes such as “The first step towards social integration is to be exploited” are utilised to underline the company’s philosophy. Target groups for the concept of dealing with problems are administrative offices such as the “State Office of Canonisation” as well as private companies or individuals, like “people without a task”. Reservations are set up for the observation of abused individuals, deploying guards that have been trained under Ceausescu. Abuse, spying and self-denunciation are recurrent themes – on the agenda of a wide spectrum of programmes. By assimilation or mockery of both neo-liberal and repressive mechanisms, Gunstheimer questions social and political conditions as well as the way in which we deal with twentieth century European history.

In her work *Heiligensprechung (Canonisation)*, which can be seen in the Galerie im Taxispalais for the first time in Austria, she presents an Austrian federal governmental project: a state office for canonisation set up in 1976, echoing the process of canonisation according to Catholic Church law. Austrian citizens, having made a considerable financial contribution, could apply to this office to set in motion their own or anyone else's "canonisation". Personal vanities, religious fanaticism and other motives prompted applicants to subject themselves to an eligibility procedure that delved deep into their private sphere and involved a rather dubious state voyeurism. Although the office was closed again in 1981, a total of 8,625 applications had been submitted during this period. However, only three people were elevated to the position of national heroes.

A quasi documentary archive presents supposed evidence of the fictive office. Applications, letters and deceptively real, drawn newspaper reports as well as watercolour works resembling black and white photographs convey authenticity and lend the narrative an appearance of reality. The story seems absurd – and yet not so far off the truth in the jungle of Austrian bureaucracy and administration, and in a country where the Catholic Church makes a decisive contribution to cultural socialisation.

**Exhibition catalogue:**

NOVA PORTA. Maßnahmen zur Bewältigung von Risiken. Unter Aufsicht von Jana Gunstheimer  
(Measures to deal with risk. Under the supervision of Jana Gunstheimer)

Ed.: Galerie Conrads, Galerie im Taxispalais

19.5 x 26.5 cm, 320 pages

Kerber Verlag, 2010

EUR 25,-

**Jana Gunstheimer,**

born 1974 in Zwickau, lives and works in Jena. She studied ethnology and art history at the University of Leipzig (1993 – 1998 ) as well as fine arts at the Hochschule für Kunst und Grafik in Halle, in Athens and in Ohio (1997 – 2003). She won the Marion Ermer Price and an award of Stiftung Kunstfonds. at the moment she is artist in residence in Villa-Massimo in Rome. Exhibitions: Galerie Römerapotheke, Zurich (2010); Gallery Charlie Smith London (2009); Galerie Conrads, Duesseldorf (2008); Kunstmuseum Bonn (2008); Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart (2008); The Art Institute of Chicago (2007); Brandts Kunsthallen, Odense, DK (2006); etc.