

**BERLINER MORGENPOST NEWSPAPER - October 2, 2009**

*A picture for Barroso*

*Four artists created artworks to accompany the Award for Civil Courage and Dedication*

**By Alexandra Kilian**

Germany is standing on its head. England lies aslant and Italy kicks Sicily off of its boot. Europe in plastic. The New York based artist Lisa C. Soto has sorted the continent anew for José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission. Drawn on Mylar with the countries cut out and painted with green pastel, then joined together by needle and thread to a new construction. Piece by piece in seemingly endless work days.

Currently her sculpture is being mounted inside a custom made frame at a size of 120 by 90 cm. On Saturday night the artwork will be the surprise present for Barroso. It is then that at the Federal Foreign Office the Award for Civil Courage and Dedication, The Quadriga Prize, will be celebrated. A gilded replica of the original by Schadow on top the Brandenburg Gate. Four horses directed by the goddess of victory that stand for Unity, Bravery and Harmony.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall the motto of this year's award is: "walls falling – building bridges". "The Quadriga honors sociopolitical role models from or for Germany", says Marie-Luise Weinberger, managing director of Werkstatt Deutschland e.V.. Five individuals and one group will be honored at a celebrity dinner at the Federal Foreign Office: José Manuel Barroso, musician Marius Müller-Westernhagen, civil-rights activist Bärbel Bohley, former Czech President Vaclav Havel, Michail Gorbachev and the Iranian women's campaign "A Million Signatures for the Equality of Men and Women" that rallies against discrimination against women in Iran.

However a sparkling chariot and a glamorous gala isn't all that awards winners and guest are looking forward to, Werkstatt Deutschland e.V. has something special in store. Along with the Quadriga there is art. "We had the idea to support young artists that may visualize the values behind Quadriga", says Marie-Luise Weinberger. Together with Berlin painter Christian Awe she started to look around. And four very interesting talents she did find. All of them gifted and enthralled by Berlin.

**The World shapes Europe**

Lisa Soto is in her studio in Prenzlauer Berg. In front of her a table crammed with things; blackberry and laptop in between scraps of mylar and brush tips; from the wall orange cables falling down onto the cold linoleum floor. In the background Norah Jones sings softly. For three months now Soto has been living and working in the German capital. After her studies in Amsterdam 1997 and exhibitions in Manhattan, Miami and Marbella, she made a conscious decision for Berlin. "It is like New York at its artistic peak in the 70s and 80s", says Soto with her bouncing corkscrew curls. Behind her, her biggest work as of yet, the world in individual pieces. It is her shifting of territories as collage – the artist calls this "re-mapping" that had the Quadriga-committee interested. For Barroso, who will receive his award from Polish Prime minister Donald Tusk tomorrow, Lisa was assigned to create Europe departing for her previous work. Barroso, says the award committee, stands for the growing together of Europe.

Lisa Soto herself feels honored too. "I believe it is very open-minded to issue the topic of Europe to an American", she says. However her work is not political in a literal-sense. If Germany gets to be placed next to Italy and Spain on top of Norway – it is not the countries but their shapes that have led to the assembly of the artwork. A new configuration of Europe came into existence that

demonstrates how art can transcend all borders. “As it is exciting at a dinner table to shuffle the seating order from time to time”, says Soto. “All guest can get to know each other.”

Simon Menner is another artist that has been chosen to do work for the Quadriga organization. The photographer is known for his critical photo stories in which he only uses natural light sources. He completed his studies at Universität der Künste Berlin in 2007 with the award for the best exam. In May he exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago. Night views of Bombay, Paris and Chicago in which the actual topic – sleeping homeless people – are only noticeable on second glance. Always in the picture... always slightly hidden. “With Simon Menner we were able to commit one of the most talented photographers of his generation”, says artist/organizer Christian Awe. For Quadriga Menner took photos of Berlin by night. A series of 10 images from the Brandenburg Gate to Friedrichstraße. Always in the picture the double-lined marker of cobblestones inserted into pavement that follows the former location of the Berlin wall. “I found it interesting that the markings are not really being perceived in the context of the city anymore”, says Menner. “The photographs signify the fact that the wall is no longer a symbol of a divided but of a re-unified city.” Presumably the entire suite of photos will be awarded to Marius Müller-Westernhagen, while each of the other award winners will be given at least one of the images – the Brandenburg Gate mounted on aluminum at 50 x 60 cm. This year’s award of honor winner, Michail Gorbachev, will be given the sculpture entitled “hope” by sculptor Feng Lu. Borne Chinese he fashioned a group of figurines, 11 cm tall and 23 cm long, of men and women from acrylic resin. “I wanted to create many different people that are all different and think differently, yet are still joint by mutual hope”, says Lu. Like people in the east and in the west before the fall of the wall. The self-employed artist lives in Kreuzberg and has already exhibited in Regensburg, Frankfurt and Cologne.

Also the fourth artist works at the heart of Berlin. Stefan Ssykor, painter and master student from Hochschule für Bildende Kunst, Braunschweig, has his studio on Friedrichstraße. In his works he figuratively applied the subjects of his painting with acrylic paint onto canvas. Afterwards he superimposes the same subject manifold, to create multiple layers. Thus it dissolves and melts into color and abstraction. And allows the viewer to delve into a visual space with all his senses. “It was very appealing to us that Mr. Ssykor would try the same with the Brandenburg Gate”, says Marie-Luise Weinberger. A picture resulted that does not dissolve the Gate as a subject, but blurs the background and foreground by 30 layers. One unity, on both sides, through the portal of the gate.

On Saturday at 2:30 pm the award winners, lauders and guests of honor will plant four trees in front of the Reichstag. They shall grow co-joined and symbolize the togetherness of Germany, Europe and the World. At 7 pm the Quadriga will be awarded in front of 600 guests at the Federal Foreign Office. Shortly before, at 6pm the artists will meet with the award winners at the hotel Adlon, it is then that Lisa Soto, Simon Menner, Feng Lu and Stefan Ssykor will hand over their works personally, before they will transfer to the gala dinner with the honorees.

Special edition for all guests. After the event a surprise for all guests. Begum Inaara Aga Khan, Iris Berben, Boris Tadie, Paul Wolfowitz, Lothar de Maiziere, Schirin Edabi and the invited guests of Berliner Morgenpost, Hans Wall, entrepreneur, doctor Jenny de la Torre, singer Frank Zander, Jürgen Schulz of the Björn Schulz-Stiftung, Sabine Werth of Berliner Tafel and Bernd Siggelow of Arche will receive a present. “We have prepared editions of 150 copies of each artwork”, says Marie-Luise Weinberger. Chosen at random every guest will be able to take one home.

Lisa Soto is happy to present her piece to Barroso, “I believe he will like it.”