

October 7, 2014

## **Notice by HAU Hebbel am Ufer on the closure of Dries Verhoeven's "Wanna Play? – Love in the Age of Grindr"**

On October 5, the Dutch artist Dries Verhoeven and HAU Hebbel am Ufer decided to end the project "Wanna Play? – Love in the Age of Grindr" ahead of time.

"Wanna Play?" was intended as a contribution to the question of how love, sex, and desire have changed due to the triumph of social networks, and how the boundaries between digital and public space have become more porous, for example through the use of GPS-based apps. For this, on October 1 Dries Verhoeven moved into a glass container at Heinrichplatz in Kreuzberg. His contact with the outside world initially took place entirely through the sex dating app Grindr, with the goal of inviting other users to his temporary home. The choice of this dating app, which is mainly used by gay men, was motivated by the artist's own experiences. The profile pictures, altered through a so-called "x-ray effect", and the chats, rendered anonymous, were projected in the container.

During the conception of the project, one essential component of the project for both the artist and the artistic direction of HAU Hebbel am Ufer was that the personal rights of those participating in the chats should be maintained.

After the project was running, however, it became clear some some users were still recognizable, despite the technological measures taken to alter the profile images or to anonymize the chats. It was also a mistake on our part that in some cases the participating users were not informed at the beginning of the chat that they were part of an art project in public space and that the chats would be visible in public.

Because of this, both HAU Hebbel am Ufer and the artist Dries Verhoeven have been justifiably criticized. After one particular situation in the container triggered by this problematic on the evening of October 2, all Grindr projections were stopped on October 3.

We deeply regret that, during the planning phase of the project, we did not more carefully consider the problems that might arise during the execution of the project, and above all the consequences that this entailed for third parties. These are problems that should have been avoided from the beginning, and we are sorry that we offended people's feelings. At no point in the project was it ever our intention to expose anyone. We have to admit that the questions which the project wanted to address, and which are still relevant to us after this failure, were treated in an inappropriate way.

For these reasons, we decided together with Dries Verhoeven to end "Wanna Play? – Love in the Age of Grindr" on October 5. On the same evening, Dries Verhoeven and the artistic and managing director of HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Annemie Vanackere, faced the public critique at a first public discussion.

We have apologized to any affected persons who we could identify or who were made known to us. Should there be others affected, we kindly request them to contact us at [direktion@hebbel-am-ufer.de](mailto:direktion@hebbel-am-ufer.de).

On October 15 at 8:00 pm in HAU1 there will be a further discussion event. Admission is free.