

## "ART=SHELTER"

Since I started working, wars keep breaking-in, as the first Gulf-War (1990-1991), the Rwandan Civil War (1990-1994), the Chiapas conflict (1990 to present), the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991-2002), the Bosnian War (1992-1995), the Kosovo War (1998-1999), the Chechen Wars (1994-1996 and 1999-2009), the Soviet and American Wars in Afghanistan (2001-2021), the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the 9/11-terrorist attacks, the 2nd Gulf-War (2003-2011), the First Libyan Civil War (2011) and Second Libyan Civil War (2014-2020), the Syrian Civil War (2011-present), the war in East-Ukraine (2014) and now, Ukraine in 2022. These wars have pointed out to me with a violent insistence, the question: "How to do artwork that make sense in times of war?", "Can doing artwork be a valuable response to war?" and "Does art have a healing impact on the disaster of war?". As an artist and as a human being I cannot give a definite response to these crucial questions, but what I want, what I must do, is to give an answer throughout my work, with a form. And therefore, I remember very well the first Gulf-War and what work I was doing then (see picture below). "ART=SHELTER" is the form, my form, our form opposed to the present Ukrainian-War, and furthermore, this form expresses also my belief, my instinct, my intuition toward all wars and war-behaviors: Art can and must be a Shelter, Art gives and takes Shelter.

"ART=SHELTER" wants to give form in asserting Art as Shelter for something: Art as something which creates hope - the hope of an emancipated and fulfilled life. Art as something which provokes love - the love of Art and with it, all love. Art as something which gives the desire for production - the production of Art. Art as something which stands for exchange - the sharing of beauty and truth. Art as something which encompasses inclusion - the inclusion of each human being. And Art as something which generates dialogue - a dialogue beyond all borders and all disparities. I believe Art always stands FOR something because Art constructs, is active, is productive. Nevertheless Art is also against something and as well, "ART=SHELTER" is the form for: Art - in all its expressions - against Hate, Violence, Resentment, Passivity, Anger, Negativity. This is what I want to assert and manifest through this new 'Presence and Production'-Work in Latvia.

Thomas Hirschhorn, April, 2022



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