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BOOMTOWN – Leipzig's industrial culture.

Kunstkraftwerk Leipzig presents its first in-house production with historical reference / multimedial immersive 360-degree show honours the "Year of Industrial Culture in Saxony" and displays the change of Leipzig's western districts

LEIPZIG. With the support of the Leipzig City Council and in cooperation with Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig, the Kunstkraftwerk Leipzig will present the new multimedial immersive 360-degree show "Boomtown" from September 2020. The immersive show specifically deals with Leipzig's industrial history between 1840 and 1989.

Leipzig's west was – and still is – subject to constant change for more than 150 years and has contributed significantly to the rapid growth of the city in the late 19th and early 20th century. "Boomtown" consequently focuses on the districts of Lindenau, Plagwitz and Schleußig, whose development from rural villages close to the city to an urban industrial location is shown on the basis of authentic pictures and film material.

With "Boomtown", visitors experience an immersive show full of places, squares and buildings from their current everyday life, but see them in their industrial originality. Places that are now home to the creative industry, the leisure industry or even to families and children were, not so long ago, filled with heat, noise and soot. The roots of many current contradictions can be seen in the 20-minute video show.

Visitors of the Kunstkraftwerk can now experience the transformation of West Leipzig through the eyes of four fictional contemporary characters: A local resident and an entrepreneur recall the emerging urbanisation and industrialisation in the second half of the 19th century; they illustrate the transformation of their places of residence and the hustle and bustle on their doorsteps.

The radical measures taken by Dr. Karl Heine to drain and regulate the rivers Pleiße and Weiße Elster, his plans for the development and construction of a modern infrastructure in the west of Leipzig were decisive in this. Entrepreneurs and companies such as Rudolf Sack, Mey & Edlich, Moritz Mädler, the Brehmer Brothers, Meier & Weichert and the worsted spinning mill Stöhr & Co. serve as illustrated examples of the business activities.

A fictional worker provides insights into everyday life from the early 1920s until the 2nd World War, which was marked by class struggle and political turmoil, both during the tough physical work in the factory and after the end of the shift. In a decade marked by inflation, the Great Depression, high unemployment rates and political radicalisation, he experiences uncertain times. Leipzig's West had its finger on the pulse of the times, as an industrial community and workers' quarter, as a place of social movements and political demonstrations, as an excursion destination and leisure oasis.

The emancipatory change in the GDR and the new role of women in the East German socialist state is shown through the eyes of a female crane operator from the VEB Kirow Leipzig. The daily challenge of reconciling professional development and responsibility as a mother can be seen in the multimedial immersive show. Authentic photographs illustrate working life in the GDR and focus on socio-cultural aspects with snapshots of brigades, company sports groups, and the company kindergarten, too.

"We can be happy in a dual sense," says project manager and Kunstkraftwerk-owner Prof. Markus Löffler. "With Boomtown we are making a very innovative contribution to the Saxonian 'Year of Industrial Culture'.

In addition, the multimedial immersive 360-degree show is the first show the Kunstkraftwerk has developed and produced for a theme with historical reference in its own right."

The journey through the city history of the West of Leipzig is staged by the Italian immersion artist Ginevra Napoleoni and accompanied by music by the Italian composer Lorenzo Pagliei.

Napoleoni and her team of digital artists including Francesca Scarponi and Valerio Ciminelli have already caused quite a stir with the video show "Invisible Cities", which was presented in January 2020, and with "Werk in Progress" in 2016, both celebrated among visitors of the Kunstkraftwerk and in the media in and outside Leipzig.

The artists around Napoleoni were able to work with a variety of historical illustrations, maps and plans. The material shows, among other, landmarks, flood areas, canal construction works and the connections of the then new railway network. Excerpts from original catalogues and advertisements illustrate the revolutionary development in industry and trade around 1900. Historical postcards transfer well known sights and excursion destinations such as the Felsenkeller, the Palmengarten or Charlottenhof from their founding years into the present.

The composer Lorenzo Pagliei was inspired by the historical visual material used in the visualisation and **incorporated authentic sounds from the immediate surroundings**, such as the ringing of bells in the St. Philippus Church in Lindenau/ Plagwitz, into the musical background.

Anne Dietrich, a doctoral candidate at the University of Leipzig, is responsible for the scientific supervision of "Boomtown". She has carried out extensive archival work and source studies and spent more than half a year reviewing the material. She has conducted research at the Economic Archives of Saxony (Sächsisches Wirtschaftsarchiv), the Museum of City History Leipzig (Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig), the State Archives of Saxony in Leipzig (Sächsisches Staatsarchiv) and the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (Leibniz Institut für Länderkunde), among others. Only with the material obtained it was possible to achieve the successful interaction of art and science for the immersive show.

Unusual for an immersive show is the fact that the four fictional characters in the show get their own voices to report from their everyday life. They explain their West Leipzig – which has now become our West Leipzig – to the visitors of the Kunstkraftwerk in a catchy way. From September 2020, visitors of the Kunstkraftwerk Leipzig can learn even more about the time in which they lived in, their work and their legacy in a virtual and various guided tours to selected relics of Leipzig's industrial culture.

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