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# THE ART NEWSPAPER

## After Venice, now Berlin rejects an installation inspired by the holiest site in Islam

The Hamburger Bahnhof museum has turned down Gregor Schneider's politically uncertain work

By Gareth Harris | From News | Posted: ..

LONDON. The Hamburger Bahnhof museum in Berlin has scrapped plans to erect an installation by the German artist Gregor Schneider, Cube Berlin 2006, which was originally scheduled to open this March as part of the Berlin Biennale.

Schneider says that the work, originally commissioned for the Venice Biennale last year but never realised, has now been pulled by the Hamburger Bahnhof for the same reason: the fear of offending Muslims.

The piece is a 50-foot cube made of scaffolding covered in black fabric.

It is inspired by the Ka'ba in Mecca, the holiest site of Islam.

City authorities in Venice, backed by the Ministry of Culture in Rome, denied Schneider permission to erect his Cube Venice 2005 in the middle of St Mark's Square to coincide with the Biennale opening last July.

The artist now says that a second attempt at showing the cube outside the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum in Berlin has been thwarted following discussions between Dr Eugen Blume, the director of the museum, and Peter-Klaus Schuster, General Director of the State Museums of Berlin.

Dr Blume expressed interest in erecting the cube after the Venice Biennale and even wrote a text for a book accompanying the history of the project, Art in the age of global terrorism, to be published by the Italian publisher Charta in March.

Dr Blume says in the book that 'Schneider's sculpture should be able to survive in a different context not associated with political ideas but as an art work in itself.

It has its own energy field.

It has the strength to make a statement in Berlin as a work of art and take on a different meaning there as a contemporary work of art.'

However, in November, Mr Blume sent Schneider an SMS text message which said that the project at the Hamburger Bahnhof had been 'turned down by Mr Schuster...the cube is politically uncertain for Berlin'.

Dr Blume also wrote that the situation is 'getting political' in an e-mail sent to Schneider around the same time and seen by The Art Newspaper.

Speaking to The Art Newspaper, however, Dr Blume insisted that 'there are no political reasons to stop this project.

The political side of this sculpture is not very important for me.'

He added that "in the case of Schneider's black cube, I was in two minds.

It's true I wrote a text for the Italian book on the piece but it was a text about a fictional project.

In speaking and working with Gregor Schneider about showing the work in Berlin, I became more and more doubtful.

In discussions with Udo Kittelmann, the director of the Modern Art Museum in Frankfurt, and Mr Schuster, we discovered that the place in front of the Hamburger Bahnhof is not the right site for this sculpture. Both Mr Schuster and Mr Kittelmann declined to comment.

Alternative works for the Berlin site suggested by Schneider, including a white cube and a smaller black cube in a glass case, were also rejected, according to the artist.

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