

HAVE YOU MET... VANESSA ADLER & SAVANNAH GORTON FROM **FRIENDS WITH BOOKS**

by Lisa Kosak

Featuring more than 100 international publishing houses, bookstores, magazines and institutions as well as a series of public programs, the first edition of **Friends with Books** sounds more than promising.

The Berlin Art Book Fair will open for us the doors of Café Moskau on Saturday and Sunday, and we had the

opportunity to meet Vanessa Adler, director of the fair, and Savannah Gorton, curator – in the starting blocks. Let's hear what they have to say about it...



Café Moskau Berlin

Is Friends with Books the continuation of Miss Read?

Not at all. **Friends with Books** is a completely new concept. Unlike Miss Read, which was an event, **Friends with Books** is a non-profit organization. It means that the fair is one of the activities of the organization, but not only – we have a program throughout the year (talks, book presentations,...) and we would also like to publish one book per year and be able to support the artists we are working with. A big part of the organization relates to the importance of keeping the ability to create books for artists.

What do you think about the book industry today?

The book industry has undergone a lot of changes with the internet age, but we still think that books are a viable format, and a very important one that should be promoted. Art books more specifically is a niche market still very alive. In the last years, a lot of small publishing houses have been founded and their number keeps increasing. As an example, we started with 25 publishers with Miss Read in 2009 and we could have invited 200 today.



How did you come up with this name?

The first reason is that when you come to a new friends house and the first thing you see is a shelf full of books, you immediately think “this is a good person”.

Another reason is that this fair is also thought as a chance for people to meet each other, new way to create network, friendships, dialogue. A lot of people in the art world like to be at the center of attention,

whereas book people tend to be more quiet, don't like to expose themselves so much – and if you go to the fair, you will feel this peculiar atmosphere, I really like it. And you can learn a great deal of these people. It is also very nice to have all those people coming from all over the world and converging here for two days. -

And what are we going to see at Cafe Moskau tomorrow?

It's of course not only about publishers: we commissioned four posters made by Berlin-based artists, we will also hold a few artist interventions that go beyond the book format like Claudia de la Torre from *The Liberated Page* who is playing with the architecture of Cafe Moskau and using the glass double-doors of the Atrium like pages of book, adding footnotes to the bottom of the doors. There is also the *Messy Sky Magazine* by DAAD artist Chitti Kasemkitvatana who is doing a live-magazine. Every hour, writers and journalists will contribute to it, and there will be a printer in the cloakroom – hanged on the ceiling, with the texts coming out ; like a kind of manifest.



ELIOT Berlin

What book are you reading for the moment?

VA: I am currently reading “Ich nannte ihn Krawatte” by Japanese-Austrian author Milena Michiko Flasar. It is a story about a young man who cannot find his way into the Japanese working world and meets a man in his fifties who just lost his job and spends his days sitting on a bench. One wants to work but cannot anymore, the other could work but doesn't want to – and both have a lot of time. It is very poetic and the topic of peer pressure and time is very interesting too.

SG: I read a lot of non-fiction. I'm currently reading the latest issue of *Haarper's Magazine*. I have been reading that since the 80' and it follows me during my travels.

Friends with Books - Art Book Fair Berlin,

13-14 December from 11.00 until 19.00h.

Admission as well as all events are free.