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Messe Berlin takes a break from the art fair business

The planned merger between art forum berlin and abc, the autumn event organized by Berlin galleries, is off

Berlin, 28 May 2011 – In order to strengthen Berlin's position in the art market and to open the international series of autumn art events with a new commercial exhibition format, during the last few weeks art forum berlin and abc, organized by Berlin galleries (a-z GBR), have been discussing a merger between the two events. However, due to a disagreement over respective responsibilities this merger will not be taking place. As per yesterday afternoon, a-z announced their withdrawal from the negotiations.

In 1996, leading gallery owners had asked Messe Berlin to organize an art fair and to take economic responsibility for the event. Over the last 15 years Messe Berlin has invested substantial resources in order to satisfy this request. Throughout, Messe Berlin has also followed the gallery owners' recommendations as regards the directorship of the art fair. Nonetheless, at no point did all of the associates of abc decide to commit themselves unconditionally to art forum berlin. This spring, after the associates of a-z complained that art forum berlin was entering into competition with abc, Messe Berlin immediately offered to withdraw unconditionally from the art fair market. Thereupon, the associates of a-z suggested discussing a possible merger between the two events. Messe Berlin would have been happy for this to have taken place, as it would have been the best option for Berlin as an art venue, and because it has been Messe Berlin's intention all along.

"However, a joint venture only makes sense if both parties recognise what their respective input is and if they are willing to commit to it. With an art fair Messe Berlin's added value is through its organization of the event. If this is not desired then there is no basis for conducting joint business other than solely through sponsorship. The same applies to the hosting of art forum berlin 2011. Without the support of the galleries for whom we are organizing it, it would indeed be a counter-productive event," said Dr. Christian Göke, Chief Operating Officer of Messe Berlin GmbH.

As a result Messe Berlin will for the time being withdraw from the art fair business. art forum berlin will not be taking place as planned, from 30 September to 2 October 2011.'

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