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Report From Salzburg

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The academic play scene was recently enriched by the creation of the Institute for Research and Education in Play (Institut für Spielforschung und Spielpädagogik) in Salzburg, Austria. On October 1-3, it conducted its first international symposium with participants from Austria, Germany Switzerland, Hungary and The U.S. I would translate the subject ("Spiel - Glück") of the symposium as Playing/Gambling - Luck/Happiness. Interestingly, these two word connections do not have distinct equivalents in the German language. The words *Spiel* and *Glück* both have double meanings. But then English is not totally precise either: we say, I play roulette, and not, I gamble roulette.

The Institute, as well as the symposium, intrigued me, and I simply needed to shuffle a few dates of my upcoming European trip in order to attend the symposium. Before it started, I was fortunate that I could meet the entire staff of the Institute and that I was shown the new library with its more than 1500 volumes, some of which are valuable antiques from collections of royal courts.

The institute is located within the Mozarteum, an academy for music and theater. Some of the buildings are quite new, and their lecture halls

contain state-of-the-art audio, video and projection equipment. What impressed me most was the fact that one of the members of the institute, Dr. Rainer Buland¹, had a piano in his office; I was even able to inspire him to play a piece for me. When it became known that I play the piano as well, the two of us spontaneously jammed a fourhanded boogie-woogie, culminated by the cheerful applause of the bystanders. That's my kind of play institute!

THE SPEAKERS AND THEIR TOPICS

Keynote Address: Prof. Dr. Rudolf zur Lippe (University of Oldenburg) *The Seriousness of the Unserious.*

He admonished that a loss of the ability to play and the disdain of play leads to a loss of life. When we play, we seem to be obsessed with guilt feelings of neglecting our duties. He calls the tendency of cramming our life with planned work the Lutherization of life with the resulting listlessness and joylessness of our age.

Dr. Leo Wallner, Chairman of Casinos Austria AG. *The Commercial Use of Luck in Gambling.*

He gave a broad overview of the workings of organizations such as casinos, Lotto, Totto, etc. The most interesting and perhaps most disturbing news

¹ He is now the director of the institute.

was the fact that such games will soon be brought into homes via interactive TV which allows you to gamble all you want and have instant wins or losses straight from your armchair by simply pushing buttons. Very appropriately, next year's symposium will be on the resulting dangers of addiction.

Dr. Phillipe Addor, Director of the Toy Museum in Vevey, Switzerland, gave an instructive slide show on the historical games of chance, a current exhibition at the museum.

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Roscher, Rector of the Mozarteum *Play and Happiness*
He emphasized the elusive character of happiness and the fragility of play in our culture.

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Einsiedler (University of Nuremberg) *Play of Children and Adolescents, Joyful – Stressful - Endangered.*
He substantiated many of his findings with impressive research data.

There were also two hands-on workshops by Prof. Hans-Wolfgang Nickel (head of the theater department at the Art Academy, Berlin)² and by Prof. Dr. Rudolf zur Lippe (University of Oldenburg).

If you are disappointed because you missed these, or a particular presentation, you don't need to worry. Excerpts will be published in next year's issue of *Homo Ludens* vol. III. This is the annual publication of the institute, a beautiful book with four-color illustrations. Our

Brian Sutton-Smith is already represented in Vol. II with his essay, *Notes Toward a Critique of Twentieth Century Psychological Play Theory.* (Son of a gun!)

I experienced the symposium as a jovial, playful and productive event. There were receptions, get-togethers and loosely grouped meals. Everybody was eager to get to know each other, and we had fun doing it since we were a gathering of like-minded spirits. Yet there was a very curious phenomenon which was in a way a microcosm of the difficulties the Europeans have in unifying their continent. The Austrians have a very strong tradition in which titles such as Professor, Director etc. play an important role in addressing people. I thought, when in Rome do as the Romans do, and at my arrival, I intended to comply with these rules. However, most of the other participants were Germans who had abandoned these formalities after World War II. They generally avoided titles and used last name only. One of the workshop leaders was from Berlin, a particularly informal fellow, who even addressed his group by first name (or the familiar *du*). This caught on within the group, so we wound up with three different ways of addressing each other. Of course, it was easy to lose track, and I caught myself switching back and forth between these conventions, even with the same person. The event was actually plagued by a minor Babylonian confusion of tongues. Fascinating!

² He later became part of the team in Berlin working on the Museum of PlayArt.