

## Press Release Following Art Project Baden No. 10 Jean-Damien Fleury and Nika Spalinger

### „Impacts“

Despite its monumental and radical appearance in front of the Baden train station, what "Impacts" involves is a transitory artistic intervention realized by Jean-Damien Fleury and Nika Spalinger. The interactive art work, first presented at the Festival Belluard Bollwerk International in Fribourg 2001 and currently on tour throughout Europe, is a mixture of a sport arena and a children's playground: on the surface a spectacle, in the background an ideological battle. With a playful gesture familiar from leisure parks, the two artists create a space of social encounter, while at the same time, they maneuver the visitor into an unavoidable situation of a playful trial of strength: in "Impacts", the ambivalence of the entertainment industry is not only made evident, it can also be physically experienced. The core of the installation is a ball machine, such as those used for tennis training. It spits out different colored tennis balls in quick succession, which bombard the visitor together with a hectic play of lights. During opening hours, the well secured playing field is available to everyone who wants to take part in this game, along with helmets and bats for fending off approaching balls. With a total of 9 tons (!) of steel spread over a 4 meters high cage on a foundation of 6 by 12 meters, the installation already exudes an ominous atmosphere as an object, and thus its impact is not lost, even when it is closed. Interestingly, it is particularly the protective measures themselves - bats, helmets and barricades - which become threatening objects by indicating a danger that is obviously present. In this way, the installation alludes to the problems of a society, which self-confidently reveals its protective mechanisms on the one hand, yet appears aggressive precisely because of this on the other, thus inciting counter-violence (which is exactly what was supposed to be avoided!). With their artistic intervention, Jean-Damien Fleury and Nika Spalinger establish a system of rules that remains mutable; they provide an interactive forum, in which the renewal of an existing reservoir of experiences is possible for anyone. As actors in social roles, they are oriented to reality, but in the broken form of the art work, they pose this reality for discussion. The way in which they do so results virtually by itself in a critical distance to the development of our society.

Sarah Zürcher  
translation: Aileen Derieg