

Divided Worlds – Immigrants in Hamburg

Millions moved out through the “Gateway to the World”, either of their own free will or forced. But many coming from the vicinity or from afar chose this city itself as their “New World”. Most of them stay hidden in numbers: Hamburg still has difficulties with its foreigners and its memory.

“Divided Worlds” remind of the newcomers (so called “Quiddjes”) and their constant contribution to the economical and cultural development and the cosmopolitan image of the city - until this very day.

By presenting rare photos and written documents about Hamburg’s older history of immigration, the exhibition illustrates private, as well as public aspects, of the era of “Foreign Work” (“Gastarbeit”) and the existence of immigrants of the present. Multifaceted films and an unusual design of the exhibition give rise to a vivid experience.

Nearly a hundred citizens of Hamburg coming from different nations, ethnic groups, classes of population and philosophies of life contributed their faces, voices, memories alongside with artefacts, pictures and documents.

Working Worlds

The migrant workers that were recruited between 1955 and 1973 have now reached old age, are pensioners, are unemployed or have returned to their country of origin. Therefore the museum took the last chance to record and impart personal stories of the “first generation” of migrants.

The work of immigrants carried the “economic miracle” of the industry, less visible than gastronomy and retail trade since the ban of recruitment. In the meantime you find white collar occupation, university graduates, artists and free enterprise as well as “working aside” and typical “workplaces of foreign workers”.

The exhibition tells about the challenge of recruitment, the firm’s view of “their foreign workers”, men’s work and women as pioneers, about skills not being acknowledged here and achievements of people who had to changeover radically. Stories of success appear in different dimensions and patterns.

Taking Leave of the Suitcase?

From the makeshift of hostels or shabby homes and postponing the return to the country of origin, it's a long way to becoming older in a foreign country. The protagonists of the exhibition allow insights into the manifold process of becoming homelike (native) looking at implements brought from home, discovering the city, leisure time and getting arranged, according to their chances, to their own or other people's will, to traditions and new behaviour patterns and with respect to family guidelines. One can guess the importance of networks with regard to assuring yourself and going your own way.

Open space to meet others facilitates living together. But much more had to be done as to social participation and was indeed accomplished by private initiatives, associations and public authorities.

The initial situation must not be forgotten: until today the town-gate and an "emergency entrance" characterize the impact of inclusion and exclusion of immigrants, unequal treatment and precarious circumstances. Photos taken by photographers from Hamburg give evidence of the resistance to discrimination.

Citizens of Hamburg

What remains of the concept of closed cultures and identities? Nobody is obliged to subscribe to a society without contradiction or has to feel good in a "supermarket of identities". How do you move between your "home country" and your "(second) home". What does Hamburg stand for?

In an artistic approach employing photo portraits and against the background of a taxi ride, new and old citizens of Hamburg turn towards the visitors, bringing to light a different "typical citizen of Hamburg"

The stories being told at the exhibition deal with social co-operation and coexistence, with divided worlds in a positive as well as negative sense, which you are invited to explore.