

Straelen Atrium Discourse between writers and translators

("Straelener Atriumsgespräche")

Background

Many books of fiction prose or poetry pose specific linguistic and factual problems to literary translators, which are difficult to resolve, except through a direct contact with the author. This is why the *Kunststiftung NRW* (Arts Foundation of North Rhine-Westphalia) and the *Europäisches Übersetzer-Kollegium* (European Translator's Centre) started, in December 2007, a series of annual encounters between German language writers and their foreign translators, the *Straelener Atriumsgespräche*. Through this, the work of literary translators was to be supported, misunderstandings in the linguistic and cultural transfer to be avoided and an appreciation of German-speaking literature abroad to be promoted.

The *Europäisches Übersetzer-Kollegium*, located in the small town of Straelen/Germany, has been founded in 1978 and was then worldwide the first, and today is still the largest, international centre for translators of literature and non-fiction. Many thousand translations were created in Straelen, during the past 30 years, inspired also by the work relationships among translator colleagues from all over the world. Among the features of the Centre are a library of 110 000 books and digital media, including encyclopaedias and dictionaries in more than 275 languages and dialects, and 30 comfortable studio apartments with individual kitchens.

Beyond the Straelen Atrium Discourse, the *Kunststiftung NRW* contributes to the work of the European Translator's Centre by providing a "Translators in Residence" scheme and through the sponsorship of an international translation award (EUR 25 000).

How it works

During four or five days, a new German-language book is being discussed between the author and translators. While these encounters are held internally, in a workshop style, the public is invited to follow the debate during one of the days for a few hours ("Gläserne Übersetzerwerkstatt").

During their stay, the foreign translators are guests at the *Europäisches Übersetzer-Kollegium*. The writer receives a honorarium from the *Kunststiftung NRW*. The Turkish-born, but German-speaking author Feridun Zaimoglu opened the *Straelener Atriumsgespräche* in 2007 with his novel "Leyla". In 2008, author Julia Franck met the translators of her novel "Die Mittagsfrau".

Results

As the programme is still new, it has not yet been thoroughly evaluated. However, the media echo and the response among translators has been enormous. For example, the first Straelen Atrium Discourse attracted 5 translators, in 2008 already 19 took part, most of them from European countries.

Sources

<http://www.uebersetzerkollegium.com/english-information/kollegium/index.html>

<http://www.kunststiftungnrw.de/index.php?bereich=Stiftung&kat=Stiftung&sub=aboutus>

Information from Kunststiftung NRW

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