

Sarah Khan

**„Kommt der Komet
oder kommt er zu spät?“**

**Speech for the inauguration of the Falco Monument
on June 2, 2018 in Gansbach**

**Dear Citizens of the market town Dunkelsteinerwald,
Dear Citizens of Gansbach,
Dear attending Delegates,
Dear Mayor, Franz Penz,
Dear Mr. Hölzel and Family,
Dear Katrin Plavčák,
Dear Falco-Fans,**

I want to express my congratulations to all of you for inciting this cultural-political process, you started a few years ago through a citizen's survey, and today, it finds its conclusion with the inauguration of the contemporary sculpture in the memorial of the pop musician Falco.

Gansbach did it without asking any authority for permission. Gansbach did what was probably the desire of millions of Austrians: we expressed our deep appreciation. Appreciation of the pop star Falco's life. Appreciation that his music touched the souls of this very rhetorically demanding country and enriched it.

And maybe, but this is just a personal theory, we can alleviate some of the shame his early death caused with this sign of appreciation, and this can pave the way for a new phase of commemoration, free of the demands individuals placed on him.

And all of us, who experienced the golden age of pop music and back then thought it would always continue on like this and were deceived, we all can now begin to reflect on what a crazy time this was, that raised a Falco up above us and welded us together through his songs so that we all have memories together now.

He was up in the charts, in the at-the-time heaven of attention and influence. May that person please step forward, who lived in this time and say, they do not know who Falco was?

Let me briefly explain, why I, a writer from Berlin, stand before you. I accompany Katrin Plavčák in the realization of her ideas, I was in conversation with her on the regular, almost from the beginning of the commission, and we were in Ansbach together last September, and we met the mayor Penz and Mr. Stich from the association. I then wrote a reportage, published in the art magazine *Monopol* in the upcoming edition, July/August 2018.

What is so special about the sculpture "Kommt der Komet oder kommt er zu spät" (Will The Comet Come Or Come Too Late?) by Katrin Plavčák?

Katrin Plavčák's Falco sculpture transports the embracing, electrifying, attention-seeking gesture of pop music to you. What you don't see here is Falco's visage, his hairdo, the folds of his tailored Helmut Lang suits.

Think about the sculptures of other great Austrian musicians—the composer Strauß, father and son, Mozart, Haydn—then you will see statues with a naturalistic demeanor, you recognize the hairstyle, the clothing of the time, a realistic face. Ha, Mozart was as beautiful as his music!

These attributes had for those, who wanted to commemorate these great musicians, great importance; it was meaningful to combine this information in the sculpture. They did not have mass media like us and did not distribute records or videos. Records with their large-scale covers were very important

carriers of pop-cultural information and their disappearance meant more than a change from vinyl to download. The covers were a way for bands and solo artists to make their hair and clothing known, print their lyrics, share their tone and heritage, create role models or antagonists, and register their level of coolness, their level of interesting, and their pop-cultural potential.

We do not need to create an image of Falco's visage, for this image is available in all our media. What we should come to terms with is our shared history with him, our loss, and what good is left.

When Falco died twenty years ago, in a car crash in the Dominican Republic, this was a shock, because Austria had to get used to the thought, that this musician, who had just left the limelight, and who was working on his comeback, could in the long run have a greater impact on society than we ever suspected. It was the era of records and ruthless IN or OUT lists. And Falco was at that point a little bit OUT.

Meanwhile, his importance only seems to grow. But whereto? And how and on what basis should one commemorate Falco?

Falco aligned his musical genius with the likes of Mozart, in which he implied having the same issues with the in-crowd, in the same polluted Vienna. And as proof he made a world hit out of it.

But should we imagine Falco with a powdered wig like he is seen in strange graffiti art in Vienna? The graffiti decorates the short street named Falco Steps (Falco-Stiege), at the exit of the subway station Kettenbrückengasse, behind the bicycle racks.

No, we don't actually see him as Mozart. Many Gansbacher remember Hansi Hölzel well, his visits with his dad. Falco especially enjoyed his visits to the village tavern „Zur scharfen Kurve“ (The Steep Curve); I heard a story from a man, where the innkeeper served him sausage and schnapps and the guests had to help.

In this village, the artist Katrin Plavčak places a four-meter-high, abstract Falco silhouette in the middle of a so far undeveloped square between the graveyard and the at-the-time fire department, now known as Falco Square.

And she did this, although she did not belong to the Falco-gang, who know exactly how it was back then. "I think, it can be obstructive, when one is too close to the object," she says. Her Falco stands on his tippy-toes. The silhouette is made of four welded metal sides, each with a silver or a black side. It looks like the four sides were simply jointed together. The arms are outstretched, the stylized fingers are spread.

He is captured in a consistent balancing act. "It was important to me, it was not a heavy chunk standing in Gansbach," she said. She had to think about the words of the American sculptor Alexander Calder, "Large sculptures must have lightness."

This Falco has four fingers, like a comic figure, for experience teaches five fingers always look like six. At the presentation of the model in last September, the mayor Mr. Penz and the association representative Mr. Stich immediately understood this.

Plavčak captures a gesture embracing pop culture and nowadays, this notion is a bit out-of-date. We no longer let ourselves be embraced by pop queens and kings, and we rarely sing songs together from records or the radio. Our public seems in a process of fragmentation.

This would be the grand gesture, Plavčak decided, after she intensively researched Falco's body language.

"He was posing in a freeze image," says Plavčak.

He rapped, bantered, and teased in his unique way. This charm overwhelms us to this day. Or in the words of Falco's concert manager Edek Bartz: "Falco's audience could sing along from the first to the last verse, it pervaded people, and this is why to this day, he is a great star."

Katrin Plavčak also wants to tell a story and that is why she places a rock beside the sculpture, a green-gray serpentinite from the nearby Asamer quarry, it looks like it comes from outer space. "Will The Comet Come Or Come Too Late?" she calls the ensemble of sculpture and stone, it is a quotation from Falco's Song „Nur mit Dir“ (Only with you).

"It is about hope, it turns up and then it strikes you dead," she says.

And because Plavčak adds a spotlight to the scene, light and shadow will play with the sculpture night and day. And then this figure begins to live and people will travel to Gansbach to literally stand in the shadow of Falco.

We can be curious about the selfies the youth will make with this Falco and the Instagram series of visiting cool bands. There is a new generation of Austrian bands, that could spar with Falco in terms of wordplay and punch—well almost.

And the question to the celestial body—Does the Comet Come or Come Too late?—is still relevant for those running after success, even if it records, that can be sold for millions of dollars, are no longer a marker of this.

But the youth that will meet at the Falco Square, with the right data plan, will be able to inform themselves with all worldwide available media on the Internet, what Falco did and how his music and his life was. That this happens so silently and side by side, the space of music and youth has become so quiet and this difference to this golden era of records is greeted nowadays with such disbelief, this makes me pensive.

That is why this sign, placed here today, is so important for art, society, and pop culture history.

Thank you for your attention.