

ARTFORUM

Santiago Sierra's Gas Chamber; Olafur Eliasson's "Art Car"; Gaßner on Schneider's Cube; ARS 06 and more...

SIERRA TURNS SYNAGOGUE INTO GAS CHAMBER

For Santiago Sierra's latest project, the artist has transformed a former synagogue near Cologne into a gas chamber. At the Stommeln Synagogue in Pulheim, Germany, the Spanish artist has installed tubes to funnel carbon monoxide into the synagogue from six running cars parked outside. Visitors, who must don gas masks to protect themselves from the toxic exhaust fumes, can enter the site one at a time and stay for only a few minutes in the accompaniment of a fireman. *245 Kubikmeter*—which refers to the volume of the synagogue—is on view from 11 AM to 5 PM every Sunday, with the exception of Easter, until April 30.

As *Der Standard* reports, Sierra hopes to raise awareness about "the banalization of the Holocaust" as well as "the industrialized and institutionalized death through which European people lived and still live in the world." His intervention is the latest in a series of public art projects, which began in 1990 when the Stommeln Synagogue was transformed into a "Denkmal im Wandel" (Monument in Mutation). Richard Serra, Rosemarie Trockel, Carl Andre, and Rebecca Horn are among the artists who have created temporary works at the synagogue, which has not been used as a religious site for eighty years.

Der Zentralrat der Juden—the Jewish central advisory council in Germany—has heavily criticized Sierra's intervention. According to the council's general secretary Stephan J. Kramer, the work "goes way beyond the limits of what's acceptable" and is "insulting to the victims" of the Holocaust. "If this is the new form of memory," said

Kramer, "then should we reopen Auschwitz and hand out gas masks to the visitors so that they can get the real experience?"