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Wrapping of the *Ringturm* building in 2016: “Unburdened” becomes part of Vienna’s cityscape

In celebration of the 25th anniversary of the group’s Czech Group company *Kooperativa* in 2016, the *Ringturm* building is being transformed into a monumental art installation designed by the Czech artist Ivan Exner.

This will be the ninth time that the historic office building on Vienna’s *Ringstraße* is enveloped by huge printed netting sheets. Work will shortly commence on preparing the building’s façade to display Ivan Exner’s work “Unburdened” throughout the summer. Since 1993, the Czech artist has cooperated closely in numerous art projects with the *Kooperativa pojišťovna, a.s., Vienna Insurance Group*, celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. *“Every year, the Ringturm’s wrapping conveys new approaches and perspectives and invites people who see it to let their minds wander. In 2016, Ivan Exner presents his own vision of growth and future, his work reflecting a part of our company’s history. “Unburdened” symbolizes and celebrates the 25th anniversary of our Czech Group company Kooperativa,”* explains **Günter Geyer, CEO of the main shareholder of the Vienna Insurance Group (VIG), the Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein.**

The work “Unburdened”

Exner’s work, entitled “Unburdened”, shows a boy standing on a hill flying a kite. The child’s raised head and his tensed, straight back show that he is fully absorbed in his lively play. The boy is a symbol of ease and carefreeness. Another important element in the painting is the endless sea horizon lying before the child. Instead of the office building, passers-by will gaze at the open sea in the middle of a densely built-up area of their city. Between the child and the distant horizon lies endless vastness. The colourful kites are flying in different spheres: while two are flying high in the sky, one is drifting towards the horizon and a fourth one is soaring vertically into the sky.

“If we look at the painting’s composition, the vertical is emphasized by the shape of the child and the horizontal by the sea horizon. The vertical and horizontal lines symbolize growth and the future, and the Ringturm building in Vienna’s cityscape reflects these same themes,” explains **the artist Ivan Exner** of his work and the special exhibition surface.

The artist

Ivan Exner was born in 1960 in Pardubice and has devoted himself to drawing and painting since his earliest childhood. He completed his studies at the Prague Academy by passing the state examination in 1986 and still lives and works in Prague today. For more than twenty years, he has cooperated closely with the VIG’s Czech Group company *Kooperativa*. He has been the company’s fine arts consultant for many years and, as such, has played an important role in building the company’s art collection, being a member of the collection’s board of trustees today. He is the curator of the exhibition “Portrait and Figure” currently on display at the company’s headquarters in Prague until 25 October 2016.

Dedication to art in Austria and Europe

In addition to its social commitment, the *Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein* is dedicated to advancing a cross-border cultural dialogue. The main shareholder of the leading insurance group in Central and Eastern Europe is devoted to promoting a wide spectrum of different art projects in Austria and abroad, as well as supporting young artists. The wrapping of the *Ringturm* building is a very conspicuous sign of the company's ethos of supporting the arts. The netting sheets enveloping the *Ringturm* were designed by Austrian artists for four successive years. Following this successful start, artists from Austria's neighbouring countries have been invited to design the sheets from 2012 onwards. In 2016, the Czech artist Ivan Exner is following in this tradition; his work will be on display on 4,000 square metres of printed netting sheets from the middle of June until September.

From Austria to Europe: 25 years of *Kooperativa*

In 2016, the *Kooperativa pojišťovna, a.s., Vienna Insurance Group*, celebrates its 25th anniversary. The Group's acquisition of interests in the Czech company has facilitated its entry into Central and Eastern European markets. Today, the Czech market is the second most important market after Austria for the Vienna Insurance Group. With a market share of approximately one third, the Vienna Insurance Group is the country's largest insurance group. In addition to *Kooperativa*, the Group operates with two other insurance companies in the Czech Republic: *Česká podnikatelská pojišťovna, a.s., Vienna Insurance Group (ČPP)* and *Pojišťovna České spořitelny, a.s., Vienna Insurance Group (PČS)*. The Group's reinsurance company, *VIG RE*, was founded in Prague in 2008; since that same year, the shares of the Vienna Insurance Group have been listed on the stock exchange in Prague.

Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein is the main shareholder of the Vienna Insurance Group (VIG) and provides support for the Group's cultural and social activities, with a focus is on enhancing cross-border, intercultural exchange. The emphasis is also on creating an environment in which individual cultures can thrive. Partnerships and initiatives are geared towards supporting the activities of social organizations, especially in the Central and Eastern European countries in which the Vienna Insurance Group has a presence. As the main shareholder, Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein is also concerned with key strategic matters within the Group.

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