

**Address by Juergen Boos, Director, Frankfurt Book Fair**  
**At the preview press conference**  
**on the 2010 Guest of Honour, Argentina**  
**October 15, 2009**

**Embargoed until Thursday, October 15, 10.30 a.m.**  
**Check against delivery.**

Ladies, Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

A cordial welcome to all of you at this preview press conference on the 2010 Guest of Honour, Argentina!

A young, bored man takes a photograph of two lovers in a park. Back home, he hangs his photos up to dry - and discovers irritating details. He enlarges the photos more and more until he is finally certain that they show the tip of a shoe protruding from the underbrush. He has photographed a murder.

I have always been fascinated by this scene from Antonioni's film 'Blow up'. It motivates us to look at things closely, but it also makes us think. What is true? What do we really see? And what do we want to see? The surrealistic short story that inspired Antonioni's film was written by an Argentinean author, Julio Cortázar.

Argentina as the Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair - at first glance, this seems to me like the lovers from the film, for what we see is tango! Borges! Cortázar! And, of course, Diego Maradona, Che Guevara, and Evita Peron.

In our minds, Argentina's place is occupied by memories even before we get to take a look at the country. For a Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, this is unusual, for we commonly deal with undiscovered literatures. In the case of Argentina, there is no lack of *aficionados*, lovers of Argentinean literature.

The ground appears well prepared: in 1976, the literature of Latin America was the first Guest of Honour in Frankfurt; this year, Argentina is the third guest honoured by the Frankfurt Fair, after Mexico in 1992 and Brazil in 1994.

What we see in Argentina's literature are its classics of modernity. What we see is what we are familiar with - or think we are.

Let us take a look at the background of the love affair.

Our first approach will be made easy by the more than 40 events dealing with Argentina that will be held at the Fair. We can meet authors like Ariel Magnus, who grew up in Buenos Aires, city of books, libraries, and publishing houses. Then Magnus, who is of German-Jewish extraction, felt drawn to Heidelberg. When he returned to his native country, he was taken aback to see so many Chinese living in his city - the city that became a second home to so many Europeans in the past. Magnus wrote a mystery novel about the new Chinatown in Buenos Aires, which he discussed five days ago in Berlin with the Chinese author, Li Dawei.

This is how global Argentina is.

Violence, reminiscences, and myths as well as humour are the themes offered by Argentina in 2009, breaking the ground for its appearance as Guest of Honour in 2010. Next to the 'grandees', Argentinean literature contains an undiscovered choir of many voices, including a group of much-debated authors who are fond of experimenting: Osvaldo Bayer, Martín Kohan, Washington Cucurto, Gisela Antonuccio, Juan Terranova, Pablo Toledo, Florencia Abbate, Samanta Schweblin, Mariana Enríquez, Diego Grillo Trubba, Claudia Piñeiro, and Federico Falco. Comics have a long tradition in Argentina; Mafalda de Quino is

an international star, and young draughtsmen like Maitena or Rep are moving up.

With its tally of 300 publishing houses and around 22,000 new publications per year, Argentina's book market is opulent. The Frankfurt Book Fair has been represented for some years at the stand of the German book industry at the Buenos Aires book fair. Relations between German and Argentinean publishers are close, and the Book Fair team has made many good friends in Argentina.

So I know from experience how the Argentineans love books, love to read, but also feel the need to express themselves, to become authors. In 2011, Buenos Aires will be the world capital of books, and everyone who has been there will know how much it deserves that title. Argentina's Ministry for Foreign Relations, International Trade, and Culture plans to launch a campaign to promote translation to coincide with the country's appearance as Guest of Honour. Thus, there is reason to hope that many German readers will have an opportunity to explore the diversity of Argentina's young literature in 2010. Around 100 titles will receive funding.

In this literature, there are many and varied irritant elements - shoe tips in the underbrush. The violent history of the military junta, the history of European and indigenous influences, politics dressed up as literature: this, too, will expect us when Argentina appears as Guest of Honour in 2010. On the 200th anniversary of independence, Argentina will show its cultural face in Frankfurt.

I am looking forward to that - and I am ready to look closely.