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## Deborah Sengl, *VIA DOLOROSA*

29 November, 2013 - 25 January, 2014

**Opening:** Friday, 29 November, 2013, 7 - 9 p.m.  
Opening remarks by **Prof. Dr. Claus-Peter Haase**,  
Honorary professor at the Art-historical Institute, Free University  
Berlin, Former Director, Museum for Islamic Art, Berlin

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The Viennese artist Deborah Sengl (born 1974) characterizes her series *Via Dolorosa* as follows:

The point of departure for the series *Via Dolorosa* are the fourteen stations of the passion of Jesus Christ. In this series, however, what we see is not the Son of God, but a chicken, suffering the fate of a martyr.

What might seem blasphemous on first sight is actually not a critique of the Christian faith, but focuses on the suffering of animals in contemporary food production.

Obviously, in feeding a continuously expanding world population today's food industry is unavoidable, but its methods and their effects are highly questionable. The suffering of the animal martyrs saves us members of the western industrialized nations from hunger – and its concomitant unrests. But the fuller our stomachs get, the more our souls seem to starve.

Deborah Sengl was trained both as an artist and as a biologist. This clearly shows both in her artistic approach as well as in her techniques. In her objects she frequently works with animal preparations, and in her paintings she routinely replaces the heads of humans with those of animals, like in classical fables. As far as content is concerned she has spent many years examining and analyzing structures of society with regard to relationships of power and dependence, as well as the interplay between perpetrator and victim. In her series "Ertarnungen" (Camouflages) she created combinations of different animals, with the predator taking on the form of his prey, such as the proverbial "Wolf in Sheep's Clothing". The objects represent compelling variations on the themes of camouflage and deception, mask and simulacrum. Using phenomena occurring in nature as well as invented variants of these, she sheds light on specific features of an all-too-human world. Other series explored topics like medicine, sports, fashion, politics, consumer behavior or the Catholic Church. The out-of-control eating habits of our "civilized" society was already at the focus of her series "ALL YOU CAN LOSE:" all the body weight mindlessly gained in the big feasting has to be shed again somehow, with considerable effort. From this it is a quite logical next step to examine our relationship to the animals we expose to the horrors of industrial mass husbandry and devour on a daily basis, usually without giving it a second thought.

NOTES  
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Deborah Sengl (\*1974, Vienna).  
From 1992 studied at the  
Hochschule für angewandte  
Kunst, Vienna (Master class  
Terzic, Dept. of Visual Media  
Design).  
1995 guest student at the Art  
Academy Berlin-Weißensee  
(Fashion Dept).  
1997 Diploma (Master class  
Attersee, Dept. of Visual Arts).  
Since 1995 frequent exhibitions  
in Austria and abroad.