

Press Release: Art Project | Art in Public Space

***Light Trap Hamburg, Temporary Light Installation  
in the Port of Hamburg to Examine the Impact  
of the “Blue Port” on Biodiversity***

**Fri. 7 – Tue. 11 August 2015,  
Port of Hamburg and City-Sporthafen,  
Nana Petzet and Bernd Reuter**

The project *Light Trap Hamburg* is supported by the Cultural Authority of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg in the frame of the program “Art in Public Space”.



As diurnal beings (active during the day), humans have tailored the environment to suit their needs and, with the aid of artificial lighting, have expanded their activity radius into the night. “Humans have always strived for light – the light bulb has made them ruler over day and night” (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 31 July 2014, “Im hellen Schein” (In bright Light)). With the aim of acknowledging the key role that light plays in science and culture, the UNESCO has declared the year 2015 as the International Year of Light. Critical reflection on the adverse consequences of artificial lighting merely plays a minor role in the UNESCO program. That the night needs to be protected, to a certain extent, against the excessive use of artificial light sources in industrialized countries, is not being addressed.

The environmental problem of light pollution evidently is perceived less acutely than, for example, problems of radioactivity, noise, climate change or air and water pollution. In the publication “Protection of the Night – Light Pollution, Biodiversity and Nocturnal Landscape”, released by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation in 2013, a change in awareness regarding the assessment of light emissions is thus being called for.

### **Nocturnal Habitat**

Over 50 percent of the animal species classified worldwide are insects. The number of insect species is estimated at ten million. In Germany the total number of around 33,000 species is distributed among 28 orders, some of which are very species-rich, including beetles, dipterans (two-winged insects) and hymenopterans (membrane-winged insects). The majority are flying insects, many of which are night active. In studies for measuring the flight activity of insects

near light sources, around sixteen insect orders were counted. Moths gather at the light sources in large numbers, but also other insects head for the light in masses, especially those that swarm only on a few days in summer. This can be clearly observed with dayflies, which fly along rivers in huge, cloud-like swarms gathering near light sources on bridges and on the shore, flying around until, finally, they die beneath the luminaires. Such behavior of insects near light sources – beginning with a magical attraction and ending with the death of the animals – is called the “vacuum cleaner effect”.

### **“Blue Port” Simulation**

The “Blue Port” is exemplary for Hamburg’s city marketing policies, which have continually celebrated artificial illumination as an aesthetic means, leaving possible adverse effects unquestioned, all along the lines: Light generates attention, light draws visitors – and therefore, the more light, the better. In 2014, on the occasion of the “Cruise Days”, the Hamburg-based light artist Michael Batz had, for the fifth time, installed 12,000 light sources – mostly blue fluorescent tubes – throughout the port and the HafenCity, mounting them with a team of 40 assistants and 40 km of cable onto buildings, quay sections, cranes, jetties, pontoons, launches, ferries, tugboats, docks, operational vehicles, trees, bridges etc. From 28 July to 3 August 2014, the “Blue Port” and “Cruise Days” had drawn 600,000 visitors. “Blue Port” number six is scheduled to take place already this year in September, and will thus illuminate the cruise ship parade and entire port scenery following a new annual rhythm, and no longer every two years as before.

Short-wave light from the range of blue light lies within the scope of 350 to 550 nanometers, alluring to insects. In tests with the kind of fluorescent tubes that are used for “Blue Port”, we could observe a strong attraction of the blue light on insects. A further component of our Light Trap is a white panel of fabric attached behind the light source, meant to invite insects to dwell on it. This will allow the experts for night-active insects involved in this project to better map the approach of the insects.

For verification purposes, individual specimen will be caught and preserved in glass containers. Exterior conditions influencing the insect flight such as temperature, precipitation, wind and the moon phase will be determined in order ensure a comparability of results with the referential “Blue Port” of 2014. To establish a relative percentage in the evaluation of the flight frequency of insects at an average “Blue Port” event, the boat Repsold with the Light Trap will anchor at the City-Sporthafen for two nights from Monday, 10 August to Tuesday 11 August. This will also allow the systematic data collection with regard to stationary carriers of light sources, as for example the Elbphilharmonie and port cranes.

### **Light Trap on Fireboat Repsold and Blog**

With the temporary light installation *Light Trap Hamburg* in the port of Hamburg, we are testing the illuminants used during the “Blue Port” in 2014, precisely one year later, in view of their attractive force on insects. On the historical fireboat Repsold, known through the TV-series “Großstadtrevier” (metropolitan district), we will install an octagonal “Blue Port” dummy consisting of sixteen blue fluorescent tubes of 150 cm each. During the weekend of 7 to 9 August, the Repsold with the 4-meter high light object will cruise in the core section of the “Blue Port” along the Landungsbrücken (jetties) and the Hafencity, from dusk until after midnight. A banner mounted onboard will call the attention of port visitors and passersby to the website of the project *Light Trap Hamburg*. For our blog on the site [www.lichtfallehamburg.de](http://www.lichtfallehamburg.de), all activities will be documented by a wildlife filmmaker specialized in filming insects, using a video camera suited for macro shooting at night.

**The opening will take place on 7 August, at 20:00 hrs, at the viewing point of Park Fiction (Antonipark) at the St. Pauli Hafensstraße.** The Repsold with its Light Trap will be easily visible from this location. With our octagonal [experimental Batz set-up / test Batz](#), we intend to question the signals that are being produced with this “quiet sensation” (Der Hamburger, July 2010, “The Philosopher of Light”) “Blue Port” at the service of tourism and in the name of art. *Lichtfalle Hamburg* addresses the adverse effects of large-scale city illumination on biodiversity. In a figurative sense, it also considers the entire city as a light trap for all organisms living in it, including humans.

Images: available as a free download on our website [www.lichtfallehamburg.de](http://www.lichtfallehamburg.de) under “Press”

Photo credit details: “Peacock moth, caught 8 July 2015”, photo by Helge Mundt

**Press contact:**

Nina Kalenbach

Tel.: +49 (0) 40 60 73 10 29

[presse.lichtfalle@hamburg.de](mailto:presse.lichtfalle@hamburg.de)

[www.lichtfallehamburg.de](http://www.lichtfallehamburg.de)

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