

European Culture Capital Ruhr 2010:

100 aluminium figures for Borbecker Halblang Project

The Borbecker Halblang Project is one of the many projects for the European Culture Capital Ruhr 2010 programme. There are 21 schools and over 400 schoolchildren from the Borbeck area of Essen participating in this interactive project. Some 100 aluminium figures will be colourfully painted by the children and then erected at events in the area.

The figures were made from 4-mm thick aluminium sheet by Essen-based Westdeutscher Metall-Handel using waterjet cutting and are a reminder of a period that stretched from the nineteenth through to the middle of the twentieth century. In those days, hardship meant it was common to buy children's clothes a size larger than necessary so that the children could 'grow into them'. The expression 'Borbecker Halblang' came to be used throughout the whole of the Ruhr region for this and it was used mainly to describe boys' trousers. There was a reinterpretation of the expression after the Second World War when many people were unable to afford summer clothing, so they often cut down old trousers and turned them into suitable summer wear.

The aluminium figures manufactured by Westdeutscher Metall-Handel were designed by the artist Günter Steinmann and are a reminder of this 'Borbecker Halblang'. The stylised figures – boys and girls – are 1.5 metres high and a metre wide and are 'dressed' in short trousers. They await visitors to Ruhr 2010 with outstretched arms.

The aluminium figures are being financed solely by sponsoring. When they are completed they will be erected throughout the whole of the Borbeck area. There is already a firm booking for the first event: on 25 May the Schlossschule Borbeck school wants to use ten figures to mark its 111th anniversary. The Borbecker Halblang Project is also planning its own activities, including an action day when all of the figures will be erected between the centre of Borbeck and the Schloss Borbeck moated castle. A presentation of the painted figures will follow in the middle of May.

www.borbeck2010.com

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