



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **THOMAS MANN: DEMOCRACY WILL WIN!**

**Exhibition at Goethe-Institut New York, September 9-November 4, 2021**

New York, NY (September 8, 2021)—“It is a terrible spectacle when the irrational becomes popular,” said **Thomas Mann** in his famous speech at the Library of Congress in 1943. Today, we are witnessing the fundamental values of democracy being called into question once again, with populism and nationalism - and a pandemic - putting massive pressure on our democratic society. The exhibition *Thomas Mann: Democracy Will Win!* is intended as a concrete contribution to the current debate on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Thomas Mann House in Pacific Palisades, California, forms the metaphorical center of the exhibition. From this refuge in exile, Thomas Mann campaigned for a new understanding of democracy. Today, the house is once again at the service of intellectual exchange and transatlantic understanding.

The first part of the exhibition uses Thomas Mann's political biography to show how the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature went from being a monarchist to a staunch opponent of National Socialism and a committed fighter for democracy. Photographs, texts, excerpts from the famous radio addresses to "German listeners!" trace his intellectual, political and spatial path.

The second multimedia part links this history with the present. What makes a political person? How does one become a supporter of democracy? How does one defend one's stance? Examples from the recent past, films and interviews, tweets and quotes from personalities from politics, pop, literature and society - such as Greta Thunberg, Saša Stanišić, Donald Trump or Barack Obama, Igor Levit and Edward Snowden - illustrate the importance of the question: how can we defend and sustainably strengthen democracy as the only possible form of society? This is a task that is more important than ever today, in times of global migration, climate change and new pandemics.

The concepts of *beginnings*, *zeitgeist*, *commitment*, *action* and *responsibility* structure the exhibition and show the ambivalences that even a democratic system cannot eliminate. Thomas Mann's life offers numerous points of contact to illuminate the state and future of democracy - true to Mann's dictum: “Democracy Will Win!”

**Mark Lilla**, political scientist at Columbia University (*The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics*, 2017), will speak at the opening on 9/9 at 6pm. The extensive accompanying program, “What Spaces Are We Fighting For,” produced in cooperation with the **Architectural League**, explores what spaces a democracy needs to function, what endangers it, and how our understanding of the role of architecture in democratic culture has changed in recent decades. With VATMH Alumni **Ilija Trojanow**, **Doris Kleilein**, and **Friederike Meyer**, as well as **Niklas Maak** and **Mariana Mogilevich**.

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**THOMAS MANN: "DEMOCRACY WILL WIN!"**

**09/09-11/04/21**

An exhibition of the Literaturhaus München and the Thomas Mann House, in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut New York, made possible by the generous support of the German Federal Foreign Office.

**OPENING HOURS:** Mon/Thu/Fri 10am-1pm, Tue/Wed 10am-5pm

**ADMISSION:** Free of charge

#democracywillwin

The **Goethe-Institut New York**, one of 159 worldwide branches of Germany's cultural institute, presents a range of programming in the arts and humanities, including lectures, artist talks, film screenings, performances, installations, exhibitions, readings, public discussions, and conferences. We address current issues from both German and US perspectives. Working in close collaboration with local and international partners, we aim to build inspiring and long-term relationships.

The **Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e. V.** promotes intellectual and cultural exchange between Germany and the United States of America as an independent and nonpartisan intermediary of the Federal Republic of Germany. The association awards scholarships at the two residences of Villa Aurora and Thomas Mann House in Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles. The Thomas Mann House was acquired in 2016 with funding from the German government and opened in June 2018 by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

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