

LEIPZIG 1813

AMIDST THE CONFUSION OF THE BATTLE OF THE NATIONS

That Yadegar Asisi would at some point focus on The Battle of the Nations was not necessarily a given. Although he grew up in Leipzig, for a long time he was unable to get into the subject. He considered the Imperial-era memorial that was unveiled to much debate in 1913 sufficiently representative of the subject, in the absence of a thematic reference of his own. It was while thinking about Leipzig's standing in 1800 – how important it was as a centre for trade and fairs, how the people there lived, and why, out of the blue, the biggest battle in history up to that point should take place on its doorstep – that he hit upon his concept: how was it that so many European states, with something like 600,000 soldiers between them, went into battle around Leipzig, raining down chaos, misery and death on its 35,000 citizens, leaving behind around 100,000 dead and a host of towns and villages wiped out by a typhoid epidemic that continued to rage after the battle had died down? Isn't this tragedy essentially the story of every war that has happened before or since?

To create a good understanding of the event, the panorama depicts it from the perspective of the city and its inhabitants. Thus, it is a panoramic overview of the city of Leipzig during a harrowing time in its history and not a 19th century-style battle painting. LEIPZIG 1813 is more of an anti-war statement.

Leipzig in the immediate aftermath of the battle in October 1813 is laid bare across 3,500 m². The viewers' vantage point is from the roof of St. Thomas's Church on the edge of the city. From there, they can follow events in the city centre and surrounding areas, where the bloodiest battles against Napoleon and his troops took place. Through the architecture of 1813, Asisi represents the relatively unscathed city of Leipzig, which, nevertheless, had to accommodate countless dead, wounded and stranded people from the surrounding villages that had been destroyed. The area is chaotic and thronged with people, from the advancing victors and retreating French army to the many injured in public hospitals.

The panorama of the city of Leipzig in 1813 was displayed in the Leipzig Panometer from August 2013 to the end of 2014.