

Lukas Duwenhögger  
"Probleema"

11 November – 16 Dezember 1995

On the installation "Probleema" 1995

The past several years have brought increasingly multifaceted critical analyses of the complex of privileged gazes /speech.

Established forms of critique have in many instances been revealed to be paternalistic, homophobic, misogynous, racist, sexist, and exclusionary.

Ethnic and/And sexual minorities, in particular, have waged sustained struggles to dismantle entrenched dichotomic structures, call the operation of (Non) representation in question, and make their voices heard.

Disturbance has spread throughout domains where discourses are prone to serve interests invested in the reproduction of one status quo or another with its starting-from-a-blank-slate moment of choice. This has been accomplished by minorities who refused and still refuse to put up with the critical establishment's attempts to silence them and dispossess them of their visibility.

The installation "Probleema", the title is borrowed from a painting by the Finnish artist Akseli Gallen Kallela (1865-1931), consists of 5 oil paintings and a timber cottage. It scrutinizes a specific form of the privileged gaze, the gaze of homosexual panic, in an avant-garde structured by homosociality. In 1894, the 4 bohemians in Kallela's picture had the exact vision they needed to shore up their profound belief in their mission: to defend the newly discovered national heritage against a just as newly discovered decadence.

The apparition, an esoteric Egyptian deity, came from afar and transmitted to them what these young-national Romantics called the "World Spirit".

Educated in Paris under the thoroughly urban banner of plein-air realism, they are now weary of beaming summer attires before railway bridges.

Their swank place of assembly- a private room at the Hotel Kämp-holds less interest to them than an ascetic retreat into the barren landscapes of Karelia in Finland's east.

So they brood over a program, and the community for which they make plans is breathtakingly vast: nothing less than a New Nation will do.

That the planning staff is an all-male cast is conspicuous, as is the nature of their source of inspiration.

The socialist literary critic Georg Brandes f.i.is rejected by one member of the group as a "pouting hero of enlightenment who has warned us in vain to beware of the new reactionary trend."

The pinions of Osiris ... the fields along the river Neckar-100 years later, in Christian Kracht's bestselling novel "Faserland", the hottest tears are shed over the loss of the best friend, the greatest fear is that of gay rape, and the most deeply felt yearning is to be united with a pure- and absent- woman in founding a reproduction plant for the sublime.

The angel's name: Isabella Rossellini.

The location of the training camp in compulsory heterosexuality: the Swiss Alps.

The reason behind this program: one man called Mann (first name Thomas).

In both homosocial scenarios, the vehicle that lets the protagonist attain the admired friend's approval and love is the stylized effacement, even total absence, of women. Their place has been taken by the panicked fear of that whose name must not be spoken.

In 1995, the "World Spirit" has gone up in smoke ...

Who are these men on the other wall who manifestly allow themselves different daydreams-and how are they?  
And when it comes to painting: what does this lack of sublimity mean?

Lukas Duwenhögger, 9/10/95