

There is no literal English translation for “Wir sind das Volk“. There isn’t even one in German. It’s something totally made up. It’s bullshit.

Back in Zürich, in autumn of 2016, I discovered a sub-slogan at the local lumber supply, claiming “Wir sind das Holz” (“We are the wood”). Since then, whenever I buy plywood sheets to build shipping crates that will protect my artworks during international air travel, the chants of the German right-wing movement, Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident), echo in my head.

“Wir sind das Volk”, “We are the people”, is a chant that originates from Eastern Germany’s Monday demonstrations which took place in 1989 and 1990 as a divided Germany slid into one. In 2014, Pegida misappropriated it for their nationalist, anti-Islam, far-right protest marches throughout Germany. Their call for a morally driven, political fight transforms the meaning of “We are the people” to “We – and only we – represent the people.” Obviously, all opposition to their cry is declared illegitimate. An anti-pluralism emerges, which, in the end, can be declared as anti-democratic.

So is there a connection between a profound activity like buying lumber and the latest rise of populism? Probably, there’s not much of one, but I guess it was triggered by the fact I was applying for an O1 Visa to live in the US. On the day I received the confirmation, November 8, 2016, Trump was elected.

In 1797 Samuel Bentham, the brother of the philosopher Jeremy Bentham, invented plywood, by laminating several layers of veneer with glue to form a thicker piece. Pliable and cheap, plywood is the number one choice for building homes throughout America.

If you take your car and drive, or walk (albeit rarely) through Los Angeles, before you is an endless, repetitive scenario of accumulated private properties in the form of family houses, fashioned in plenty of stylistic architectures, constructed out of framed beams, covered with plywood, and finished with stucco. People here rarely live on top of each other. More often it’s next to each other, their face to face encounters divided by a line or a fence or a subtle sign that reads in threatening fashion: armed response. Seldom do people wander through the same door to enter that place called home.

The car itself on the other hand, for instance the SUV, is an extension of the home, on wheels. Tinted windows block gazes from the outside, permitting only the person inside to observe the outer

sphere. Human intersections are diminished. The result is the absence of real urban public space. Nearly every spot in-between houses are commodified. This shapes social behavior and engagement. Buy it or loose it, that's the bitter truth.

Dollhouses are dream houses. Originally invented as rich men's toys to demonstrate their wealth in a scale model. Later, during the Biedermeier (1815-1848), as Middle-Europe's middle class grew beneath the mantle of economic security between the Napoleonic Wars and an era of Revolutions, dollhouses were reintroduced as educational tools for girls, to teach young ladies how to behave in an orderly fashion in domestic environments.

Nowadays dollhouses result from some odd hobby activities in a basement or a California garage. Yet still, they remain the ultimate reflection of middle class desires: buying, owning, developing, privatizing and protecting properties that reflect our heritage throughout the generations, to be smeared in infants' faces at the earliest possible stage.

The history of the bourgeoisie is a shabby one. Greedy, cunning, not enough solidarity, fettered with a decreasing interest protecting communal welfare, civil rights or those excluded from "We". History taught us, the fainting of the bourgeoisie caused fascists to disinhibit their darkest desires.

The artworks on view are models made of plywood, dismantled, broken up, and emptied out. They are not haunted. And this is not the everyday, hopefully.

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