

GOSSIP MONGERS

PHILIPP GUFLE

KAROL RADZISZEWSKI

JAANUS SAMMA

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Karol Radziszewski
Stanisława Walasiewicz
2024
acrylic on canvas
170 x 120 cm
Image: Ernest Wińczyk
Courtesy
BWA Warszawa
& Karol Radziszewski

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Jaanus Samma,
Creatures of Kolga No. 1
2024
Screenprint
68 x 68 cm
Courtesy
Temnikova and Kasela
& Jaanus Samma

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Philipp Gufler
Body/Text (Urninge im Frühling)
2024
Silkscreen print on fabric, steel
Ø 300 x 300 cm
Images: Roman März Berlin
Courtesy
Philipp Gufler & BQ

design
Agata Biskup

GOSSIPMONGERS

Somewhere over the rainbow,
earlier this year

STANISŁAWA WALASIEWICZ

Dears, do you know what I heard? The artist Karol Radziszewski made a new series of paintings dedicated to me and you are also part of the exhibition, happening at BWA Warszawa this September.

ERIC STENBOCK

Ah, I heard of it, but I didn't know yet that it is confirmed. It is a joint exhibition of Radziszewski, Jaanus Samma and Philipp Gufler, right?

WALASIEWICZ

It is. They namely share an artistic interest in overlooked queer histories. With their research-based practices, they look at key moments and figures that have disrupted hetero-normative structures in the past centuries. Each of them has a specific focus on their respective region of origin and residence. Radziszewski's research mainly relates to Poland and the larger Eastern European region, while Philipp Gufler looks at his country-of-origin Germany and the Netherlands, where he is currently based. Samma comes from Estonia and predominantly revisits histories of people from the Baltics.

CHARLOTTE CHARLAQUE

How exciting! But wait, then why are you part of it, Stenbock?

STENBOCK

Well, my family is from Estonia. Although I lived in the UK most of my life, I moved to Kolga about 50 kilometers from Tallinn when I acceded to the status of Count and to the possession of the family's estates in Estonia after my uncle Count Magnus died in 1885. In 1861, at the age of one, I already inherited a family fortune when my father passed away and in 1866, my maternal grandfather died, who bequeathed me another trust fund.

TONI EBEL

Ok, someone was rich!

STENBOCK

Yes, can't deny! And I just loved decadence. I often brought a life-sized doll with me to public spaces; it was a true companion. At home, I kept numerous animals like lizards, salamanders, and toads, but also snakes. I enjoyed having a snake around my neck during dinners at times. The reactions by my guests were just deeply entertaining [chuckles]. But snakes became somehow symbolic for me and my work as a writer. I placed a snake on the cover of my 1894 collection of short stories "Studies of Death". Although I didn't live that long in Estonia, my extravagant lifestyle made a lasting impact on the locals, according to Samma. Numerous tales, songs and legends have apparently been associated with me. Therefore, Samma made two tapestries, in which he combined the Estonian craft of embroidery with symbols referencing my lifestyle. And he made two prints that combine these symbols. Ah, I see he also depicted a bear, a wolf and a monkey, because I used to keep these too [chuckles again].



ELISAR VON KUPFFER

Oh yes, Stenbock, I remember. I was born in Estonia in 1872 and I definitely have heard those stories. I am delighted we are both included in "Gossipmongers". Gufler namely made a quilt as a tribute to me—so flattering. I am glad to see that my work as an artist, writer and founder of the Klarismus (Clarity) movement resonates with younger generations. The latter I started with my partner Eduard von Mayer. In retrospect I realize that the movement had misogynic and antisemitic tendencies, but we were also advocating for social reforms concerning rights for women and homosexuals. This movement is ultimately depicted in my large-scale panorama painting "Die Klarwelt der Seligen" (1923–33), which is 26 meter long. For this piece, Von Mayer and I built a special dodecagonal room in our sanctuary in Minusio named Elisarion. Charlaque and Ebel, do you know who visited it?

CHARLAQUE

No?

EBEL

Tell us!

VON KUPFFER

The German doctor and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868 - 1935).

CHARLAQUE

Of course, we could have known. What an important figure he was for scientific research



on transsexuality and homosexuality, advocating for our rights. Both Ebel and I used to work at his Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute of Sexual Research) in Berlin, and we became lovers [Ebel giggles]. After Dora Richter, I was the second person to receive gender reassignment surgery at the institute, followed by Ebel. In the years before, we were allowed to wear women's clothes after receiving the Transvestitenschein (transvestite pass), which was a doctor's note recognized by the governments of Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic that confirmed our identity as a transvestite. My note is included in Gufler's quilt.

EBEL

That's right, as well as your nickname from your time in New York City from 1942 onwards: Queen of the Brooklyn Heights promenade.

CHARLAQUE

[chuckles]

WALASIEWICZ

Luckily, you are not the only queen in this exhibition. I was born in Poland in 1911 and moved to the USA when I was only two years old. I used both my name given at birth Stanisława Walasiewicz and the Americanized version Stella Walsh. In 1932, due to a turn of events, I represented Poland at the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. In the 100-meter dash, I equaled the world record of 11.9 seconds and won the golden medal. For this and other achievements, I was awarded the Polish Golden Cross of Merit. I continued to win other medals for track and field contests. My strides were so long that some observers likened my running style to that of



a man. In 1980, I was killed during an armed robbery on a parking lot in Cleveland, Ohio. An autopsy after my death showed that I was intersex and reportedly had genetic mosaicism. That naturally lead to discussions regarding the awards I won and gender verification in sports at large. I lived my entire life as a woman though.

CHARLAQUE

What a story. Representing such histories is so important to learn from the past. A powerful series by Radziszewski I'd say. Gufler actually made another work – a series of painted mirrors – that alludes to this intricate dynamic between visibility and invisibility, and reflects the other works in the exhibition. He also made a triangle-shaped mirror with purple and pink pigments. It references the triangle homosexuals were forced to wear in Nazi-Germany, which was later appropriated in an empowering way by the ACT UP movement during the HIV/Aids crisis in the 1980s.

WALASIEWICZ

Ah, Radziszewski also reflects on changing meanings of symbol. With one of his paintings, he references how the Olympic torch relay was actually reintroduced by Adolf Hitler in 1936, as he saw the link with the ancient Games as the perfect way to illustrate his belief that classical Greece was an Aryan forerunner of the German Third Reich.

STENBOCK

Oh boy, that is indeed something not everyone is aware of. I think we can be glad that Radziszewski, Gufler and Samma do their artistic research into such overlooked historical movements and make them visible for current generations.

WALASIEWICZ

And by naming the exhibition "Gossipmongers", they show a sense of reflection on how they start the stories— or gossips or rumors—around us anew.

CHARLAQUE

Oh humans, hopefully they continue to evolve progressively like this.

EBEL

[chuckles] Fingers crossed!

This conversation takes the idea of gossiping as a starting point, is loosely inspired by Jean-Paul Sartre's 1994 play "No Exit", and mixes facts and fiction.

It was written by Léon Kruijswijk
(Curator at KW Institute for Contemporary Art /
freelance curator and writer) on the occasion of the exhibition
"Gossipmongers" by Philipp Gufler (DE, 1989),
Karol Radziszewski (PL, 1980) and Jaanus Samma (EE, 1982)
at BWA Warszawa.

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