

Emotions (without masks)

I have done so many exhibitions, so many solo shows. I keep trying to make them different, at least for the cliché reason of amusing myself first and then amusing the viewers. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. For the "Emotions" project I have been working very hard for more than two years, especially devoting myself to its core - the rather large and complex interactive installation "Some Nice Things to Enjoy While You Are Not Making a Living". The first two venues were okay - the visitors in Bonn and St Gallen seemed to have some fun, and so did the curators and even myself. Then came Darmstadt. I had visited Mathildenhöhe several times and the plans for how the show will look in its last venue were almost entirely fixed by the curator (one of his assistants even made a wonderful 1:50 scale model of the space with all of the works constituting "Emotions" - plus some additional ones - placed in their curator-selected spaces). But then the last time I was here (to approve the final display plans) I popped in to see the installation of the exhibition before mine: the much acclaimed "Masks - Metamorphoses of the Face from Rodin to Picasso", first exhibited at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris and traveling from Mathildenhöhe to the NY Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen.

I just loved the layout and the way the masks glowed in the darkness. I wished I could have had one of those masks to hide my own emotions better – especially to disguise my fatigue from having done so many exhibitions, so many solo shows. But I had hesitated until just the right time and here is the result - all of my precious, with-so-much-labor-and-time-produced various-emotions-related art works are still in the crates (and they will remain there for the entire show). The masks have gone to Copenhagen but I have kept their original plinths and showcases; and hooks and strange devices to keep them looking beautiful and straight; and covers and spotlights; and the entire atmosphere too. And I have the feeling that there might be many emotions-related tiny stories that didn't make it to the big, spectacular "Emotions" show in Bonn and St Gallen and which - it seems - are willing to accommodate the vacant spot-lit places in these rooms. I'm sure all the art works locked away in their crates are angry but I believe I can make peace with them later, I am used to it.

Unfortunately, two of the crated pieces will enjoy being (so-so) properly exhibited at the end of the succession of rooms, in the largest space, which was last used for the big "Russland" exhibition a year ago. Due to the firm demands of the lenders (an Italian collector and a Dutch museum director), the works had to be displayed by the curator and because my original and very strong a show-without-the-show's-works idea was spoiled anyhow by the Italian-Dutch ultimatum, I gave up and the mirror which is on the cover of the "Emotions" catalogue was hanged by the curator too - along with three of his sisters and brothers.

Nedko Solakov, July 1, 2009

N.B. This morning my wife told me that it would be smart if we exhibit "...and they lived happily ever after" as well because there is the possibility that the work will be acquired by the museum. "You know, the Board better see it on the wall, though in storage", she said.

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Edited by Christy Lange