

Subfreezing temperatures, an ancient alpine hut in the middle of nowhere, a small dot in infinite whiteness, this group exhibition is dedicated to the seclusion of alpine winter. Being an art show that is inaccessible, it triggers imagination.

Furthermore the concept plays with the cliché of pure mountains, close to heaven and out of reach of the obliquity of human nature.

The fiction is immediately annihilated by the proximity of Gstaad and its mundane clientele. Surprisingly the hut's interior is tastefully renovated in modernist style. It is the snowed in hunting lodge of a famous collector.

The show echoes layers of the past, amplifies lost voices, and investigates secrets.

The bolted door alludes to a nearby chalet, which played an important role in the life of Roman Polanski.

The high mountains are countered by presumed innocence, seduction, and eventually detention. In between clean slate and blame game, canonization and damnation, the ethereal landscape bleaches out distinct perception.

Included works

The exhibition poster is hand printed by Eric Andersen followed by a depiction of the universe

The Universe, 2013
Letterpress
70 x 100 cm

A vintage hand-colored photograph by Hans Bellmer recalls broken dreams

La Poupée, 1949
Vintage hand-colored gelatin silver print
44 x 44 cm (framed)
Courtesy Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York

A tear by Bruno Jakob on a Kleenex is pinned on the blanched façade of the hut,
slowly sublimed by the weather

Nowhere but Somewhere, 2013/14
Invisible Painting / Performance / Installation
2 Tears (Hot and Cold) on a Kleenex Paper
Folded 10 x 11.5 cm

In an installation as well as a performance Ylva Ogland calls her twin Snöfrid (Peaceful Snow), who lives behind mirrors

Master of Cermonies (GJ), Conjures Forth Snöfrid"(Diptych with Applications), 2012-14
Oil on canvas, 2 x 47 x 38 cm, foldable, objects: various dimensions
1 bottle with Snöfrid's distillate (pure gold and Pol Roger champagne, stockholm 2012)
1 bottle with Ylva Ogland's breast milk (day fresh)
1 jar with snow from Blattistafel
1 measuring glass
1 mirror
1 tea spoon
1 pipette
4 serving glasses
1 napkin
Courtesy Fruit and Flower Deli, Stockholm

Olympia Scarry presents a work in Braille alphabet behind glass that thus remains undecipherable

Braille, 2013/14
Paper, framed under glass
33 x 34 x 3 cm

Andro Wekua recalls the house he was born, now part of inaccessible territory
on the Black Sea coast

Yet to be Titled (the house), 2012

Acrylic plaster, wood, steel, gypsum fiberboard and acrylic paint with stainless
steel base

34 x 44 x 41 cm (house)

90 x 60 cm dia (base)

Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York

Daniel de Roulet sends a letter to the owner of the alpine hut and reads from his novel "A Sunday in the Mountains"

Un dimanche à la montagne
Buchet Chastel, 2006
11.5 x 19 cm, 158 pages
ISBN 978-2-283-02180-4

Dear Sir,

This morning I received an e-mail from my friend Christian A. enjoining me to stay away from your chalet near Gstaad, where I have been invited to read *A Sunday in the Mountains*. My friend lives in a clearing in one of France's biggest forests. He has worked at several occupations, but these days he is a lumberjack. Every month he holds a *café philosophique*, where a hundred or so of his neighbours gather to talk about this and that. The other night, when I was there, I said I was going to visit the grandson of a former Nazi convicted at the Nuremberg trial, pointing out that none of us bears a name of our choosing. Christian objected and would not give up an inch of ground: anybody who, like you, Mr. Flick, agrees to inherit a fortune amassed in shameful circumstances shares in that shame and must be shunned. There were six of us around the table, one more condemnatory than the next. One woman said that if I went to your chalet, I should bring matches to burn it down. Then the discussion moved on to the function of art, which should be produced in ethical conditions: one cannot create a work with a piece of tattooed skin ripped off a prisoner from Auschwitz. Beyond this particular case, we wondered how many generations must go by before a person is cleansed of shame. Are the descendants of slaves entitled to compensation four hundred years after their ancestors were sold into bondage? One of the guests told us about a friend of his whose father was interned in 1940 and who, sixty years later, received for the first time a small pension, which she no longer needed. But the gesture reconciled her with life.

My French friends, in politics as in friendship, do not like compromises. I found myself alone trying to calmly think through the Flick "case". However, my own conscience, good or bad, gave me plenty to deal with. So I wanted to wipe the slate clean. That is the purpose of the letter I am writing you, a copy of which I will send my friend Christian. In it I will have to speak as much of what I know about you as of what you know or do not know about me. This being a perilous endeavour, I may as well do it before witnesses.

Nearly forty years ago, I set fire to a chalet in the mountains above Gstaad. It belonged to Axel Cäsar Springer, founder of a media empire. I accused him of being a former Nazi, which, as it turns out, was untrue. In 2006 my editor, who also owns a chalet in Gstaad, courageously published *A Sunday in the Mountains*, where I relate the circumstances in which I torched that eagle's nest, the why and the how. The whole time I kept this secret to myself, I only had to deal with my own conscience, which did not bother me too much. But after the book came out, I found myself confronting all sorts of hateful reactions that had much more of an effect on me. I was lynched by the media (you know what that is like), shunned by the literary scene (no more prizes or invitations), publicly condemned by people who, without having read my book, offered to burn down my house or even, like forty members of the national parliament, to vote in favour of a retroactive law — the statute of limitations for the crime had run out — to throw me in jail.

I also had two reasons for satisfaction. My father, a pastor in France during the war, had witnessed round-ups of Jewish children. He said he was proud of having a son labelled a "terrorist" because that is what the Nazis called the members of the Resistance. The other reason happened when the dairy farmer who lives next door to the burnt-out chalet in summer invited me over for dinner. He had not read my book either, but said he was relieved that I had confessed my crime. Now, after so many years, nobody in the village would be wrongly accused. I had put an end to the rumours. He was so grateful that he showered me with gifts.

My life has changed since that confession. I still get anonymous letters, including some that include detailed descriptions of chalets around Gstaad that I should set ablaze. For example, one suggested that the disgraced head of UBS had an alpine pasture renovated in defiance of the law. Others claimed that so-and-so, a tax exile, a rock star or a sugar baron, had an underground bunker. Or that a Greek shipping magnate or a repudiated princess added a storey to his or her chalet. True, the area around Gstaad abounds with dubious "cases" that a vigilante might like to take care of. But that is not my style.

You have a chalet there, too, and even, in addition to yours, the one where your children lived, which burned down in 2011, not to mention the one above the Arnensee, near that mountain lake in the middle of nowhere. The only way to reach it in winter is by skiing or snowshoeing. That is where I should read the confession about another chalet, just as remote, where Axel Cäsar Springer used to take his children's maid before she became his fifth wife.

About your fortune, there are different versions in the more or less authorised biographies. Here is what I can remember. You already know all this, but I am also writing it down for Christian in order to speak not about principles, but about a specific example, which happens to be yours.

Your grandfather, Friedrich Flick, known as FF, lived from 1883 to 1972. He built up an industrial empire during the First World War and, in 1933, thanks to his cosy relationship with the government, all his factories started working full blast to feed the Nazi war machine. After Germany was defeated, he was put on trial at Nuremberg for having exploited the forced labour of thousands of prisoners from, among other places, the camps. Your grandfather was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment but released after three. He went back to his manufacturing activities, making them thrive until his death at age 89.

This grandfather had three sons. The first was your father, who did not get along at all with his progenitor and died young shortly after him. The second was killed on the Ukrainian front in 1941. The third, your uncle, took over the family business.

Your father had a girl and two boys nicknamed Muck and Mick. You were born the same year I was, 1944, near the end of a war you are too young to

remember. Muck and Mick graduated from university before going to work in their uncle's factories, but they did not get along with him. So at the age of thirty, thanks to part of the family fortune, you went into business for yourself: farms in the United States, and some oilfields there, too. You built up your fortune. At forty you retired from business, settled down in Gstaad and fell in love with contemporary art. You bought thousands of objects, installations and paintings, quickly amassing a splendid collection. You met many artists who, you said, changed your way of looking at the world.

In a nutshell, you have led three lives: one you spent in the family fold, one as an independent businessman and one as an art collector. At the beginning of this century, you decided to have a museum built in Zurich to house your collection. Rem Koolhaas agreed to design it. But the plan sparked an outcry. People said your collection had been acquired with money inherited from a Nazi grandfather, that the name Flick, bloodied by forced labour, could not be laundered by art. You hesitated and refused to participate in a fund to provide reparations for the victims of your grandfather's crimes. But you did set up the *Flick Foundation Against Xenophobia, Racism and Intolerance* and offered your collection to the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. Voices rose up again in protest. "I will not stand for being treated like a guilty person," you responded. "On the other hand, I do accept responsibility for my family's history, which I have inherited." But that was not enough to cool things down. In those days, as you say, every time you opened up the morning paper you expected to see new attacks. Meanwhile, people from around the world were flocking to see the new exhibition of your collection. Had you called it a day, my friend Christian would have been right: accepting responsibility without following it up with acts is a bit easy. Christian wrote, "If a person agrees to inherit a fortune based on acts of war universally recognised as shameful, then he or she also shoulders some of the responsibility for those misdeeds, endorsing them, in a way."

The years went by and, in 2011, on the occasion of your foundation's tenth anniversary, you set the record straight at last. Nazi ideology is not an affair of the past but very present, you said, especially in the former East Germany. "Right-wing extremism and Nazi terror are matters of concern for all of us," you added. "Those people are very active, offering to help the jobless find work, to look after children and to provide meals for the poor, all the while spreading their ideological poison. We must not throw our hands up into the air and relinquish those areas to them. That is why I set up my foundation, which proposes nearly 200 projects to help 80,000 disadvantaged youth. It is a matter of nipping blind hatred in the bud. I am in favour of an unconditional ban on neo-Nazi parties. I support the Rosa-Luxemburg School in Potsdam, and I see progress." When asked why you gave the foundation your name, you say that you accept the burden of all that the name brings to mind, and that it is a part of you.

The contemporary art works you buy often have the Nazi period as their theme. You say they allowed you to face your family's dark past for the first time. The confrontation with artists, some of whom refused to accept what you wanted to do, hurt and irritated you, but also forced you to understand what others feel when they see the name Flick appearing in association with contemporary art. You say you had to spell out the details of your family history, which was taboo until then. At first, you did not want to know. You dodged the issue, but the facts were there. So you paid a researcher to find out everything about your family down to the ugliest details. The University of Munich published the results.

You have a disabled daughter and two sons. One works as a journalist for a left-wing Israeli newspaper, the other makes documentaries. For their sake, you have broken the chain of lies and silence. Now you are gradually coming to terms with your past, although, as you ashamedly admit, the behaviour of your clan still haunts you. You were a bit quick to think that you could stick your head in the sand, but the scandal caught up with you. Since then, you have felt the right to reconstruct a biography that you freely determine. Is the contact with artists what caused you to glimpse a different set of values?

Eventually, you realised that you should have also become involved in the foundation that compensates the victims of forced labour; you donated five million Euros. My friends and I asked ourselves how many generations must bear the shame of our ancestors' deeds. You have provided the answer: until, with an uncoerced act, preferably individual, History is acknowledged.

But not everybody possesses your clear-sightedness, late as it may be. You say you needed time. It seems to me that you, the owner of chalets in Gstaad, have the same restraint as another man who owned chalets in the area, Axel Cäsar Springer. When everybody, journalists and writers, accused him of being a former Nazi, he never denied it, probably preferring to acknowledge his responsibility when he divorced his Jewish wife in 1938 — not the best time. That was a coincidence between his private history and History, but he could not ignore it. Later on his son committed suicide a few days after the death of Rudi Dutschke. This new coincidence made such a tormented being of him that he lost his mind. So sometimes it takes youth and a mature age to be done with a past, a history with which one refuses to identify. It is not a redemption, just the first step in learning how to live.

My friends in the clearing, so quickly carried away by a righteous cause, would condemn you before you had the time to tell your side of the story. Some of my relatives are German, so for me it is easier to understand the long period of brooding that memory needs before it can live in peace. I like what Fritz Teufel said once in a German courtroom: "Intermittent courage is better than no courage at all."

When I received the invitation from a New York curator, Gianni Jetzer, to read in a snowbound chalet in the middle of nowhere, with no audience, I told myself it was like a parody of contemporary art, which is done without many people around, possibly behind closed doors. And this parody in itself (whoever owns

the chalet) seemed to me like a final rite of passage on my road from incendiary act to public confession. At last I was going to commit this text, *A Sunday in the Mountains*, which nobody really wanted, to the silence of the eternal snows.

I have only been invited to read from the book three times in the eight years since it was published. The first time was in Teheran, in a big room packed with intellectuals. I was asked not to read my diatribes against nuclear power and to replace them with a passage on Western terrorism. So with emotion I read a few pages intended for others, who refused to acknowledge them.

The second time was that summer in New York, at a Soho gallery where works by Jean Tinguely, Gianni Motti, Thomas Hirschhorn and others were on display. It was during a Sunday brunch. Afterwards, a woman told me that Vassili Kandinsky's widow had been killed in her chalet in Gstaad. They have been waiting thirty-five years for the murderer to give himself away, she added. I did not immediately understand what bearing that had on my situation.

The third time it was through scheming that I was able to read my text. I had been invited that autumn by the mayor of Lugano, who had no qualms about being seen out and about in the company of ultra-conservatives. When I read *A Sunday in the Mountains*, he did not object. He even considered himself very tolerant for not cutting me off. And now, for the first time officially in Switzerland, in a remote chalet, invited by the same curator who had asked me to read in New York, under house arrest like Roman Polanski, I cast an armful of evanescent sentences to the winter wind.

For us Swiss, the chalet, the *Swiss chalet*, as English-speakers say, is the matrix of all dwellings. From the Latin *cara*, which means "the place where one is sheltered", I retain the earliest meaning. The poor have their thatched cottages, the rich their palaces, but the chalet is a shelter for travellers, a piece of common property; for anybody to claim it as his or her own would be unseemly. A wooden structure with a pitched roof whose ridgeline is perpendicular to the contours, this model was popularised by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The New Heloise*, reproduced *ad infinitum* in suburbs, plains, on the shores of lakes. Flaubert found chalets ugly, Proust made fun of them (the comfort chalet), but we Swiss learn how to draw them in childhood. It is the home of Heidi and William Tell, the immediately intelligible symbol of an Alpine tradition. For me, reading aloud in an empty chalet will be the endpoint of the long, thoughtful maturation of a confession.

I once needed to write but not to go public. Had I not promised my girl friend to publish the book after her death, my readers never would have turned their white-hot hatred upon me, the fire-fighters of the Canton de Vaud would not have received the royalties I gave them, and people in the village would still be accusing each other of having committed my crime. Like you when you refused to see what was provocative about an art collection bearing the name Flick, I underestimated the collateral damage: that is why I have never been invited to read this text in my own country. I look forward to doing it soon.

Also, to add the right touch, to thank you for loaning your four walls and the warmth of a crackling fireplace, perhaps I will reread this letter, which I am writing for you and for Christian. By then, I hope to have convinced my friends in the clearing that I betray neither art nor politics by accepting your invitation.

Regards,

Daniel de Roulet.

A Layer of Snow and a Layer of Silence

Eric Andersen, Hans Bellmer, Bruno Jakob, Ylva Ogland,
Daniel de Roulet, Olympia Scarry, Andro Wekua

Blattistafel above Arnen Lake
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Organized by Gianni Jetzer

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