

Zenita Komad: 'Gott ist kein Bankomat' [God Is Not a Cash Machine]

Almuth Spiegler in „Die Presse“, July 11, 2012

Komad, at the Minorite Cultural Center, embarks upon the search for a new spirituality, located somewhere between esoterics, world religion and consumer temptation. With over 1,000 meters of twining, she reveals the intricacies of her spiritual spiderweb spinning.

It's an old trick, but it works. It worked in St. George's Monastery in Wadi Qelt, Israel, for example. The entryway there is so low that one must duck in order to pass through it, thus humbly lowering one's head. So too are visitors to Zenita Komad's exhibition at the Minorite Center in Graz left with no choice but to bow their heads in respect to the place and spirit contained therein. An elegant, blood-red cord runs, at head level, straight across the staircase-exit to the first floor, before disappearing back into the wall, breaking through the window, stretching itself into the adjoining courtyard of the old monastery, measuring the breadth of room after room, and criss-crossing through the entire art centre and exhibition space, as though the lines of energy—the intersection points of which are said to have always been the impetus for old cult sites—had suddenly been made visible.

With over 1,000 meters of rope, the 27 year-old artist, who—born in Klagenfurt and educated in Vienna—continues to rise within the 'Zenita Universe', would appear to have unveiled the intricacy of her spiritual spiderweb: 'Everything is connected to everything else', she says, whether with regard to people or worldwide religions. With heavy alchemistic pendulums made of copper and iron and filled with salt crystals, she has tuned in to this network; they hang from the ceilings in four different rooms, drawing meditative circles into the sand below them.

'I forgive myself – and everyone else.'

It is also of sand that Komad has constructed her *Altar*: 'I forgive myself' is the text one is able to decipher upon the sand-image, which is comprised of three-dimensional, downward tumbling letters that then, down upon the floor, read further: 'and everyone else'. In the face of so much treatment-transcendent wisdom, one is able, required even, to offer sacrifice by burning 'holy substances' such as frankincense, sandalwood or mint upon an altar stone—and to contemplate. Yes, Komad means it seriously; this is no mere multi-religious kitsch. She is studying Hebrew, Zen archery and sundry shamanic arts and issues. With holy earnestness, she embodies that which, at the turn of the twenty-first century compelled the first 'global generation' to explore the breadths and depths of world history: the search for spirituality. The title of the exhibition, *I Love God*, comes, devoid of any trace of cynicism, straight from Komad's heart—guaranteed.

It is the slight touch of irony and the diva-pop quality, however, that make this young-lady pathos as authentic as it is interesting: '*Gott ist das Nichts*' [God is nothingness] is gaudily sprawled across one of her canvases; yet, just above the nothingness, a red coloured '*nicht*' [not] has cheated its way into the formulation. 'God is not nothing' would constitute the resulting message. It is with nonchalance that the large format canvas appears to have thrown

the jeans jacket of a giantess over its shoulders. Is it the protective robe of a Madonna? Or is it the curtain that has so often been hung over particularly obscene or especially holy images over the course of art history?

Likewise, the relief image of a cash machine has also been adorned in everyday cladding—‘God Is Not a Cash Machine’ is to be read at the top of the format. There is no way of simply withdrawing salvation from the billowing accounts of the world’s religious institutions, it would seem. Enlightenment is not a Café Latte, one might add. Komad is doubtlessly aware of the ambivalence involved with any search for meaning in the accelerated times of Facebook and discount airlines. ‘Spirituality Is Not Shopping’ is what she titled her last major exhibition at the Jewish Museum in Vienna. There, as in the Minorite Center in Graz, an entire wall was hung with oracle-collages—historical engravings complemented by snappy slogans: ‘*Die Realität ist eine Kopie*’ [Reality is a copy]. ‘*Ich pfeif auf das ganze Demutsgequatsche*’ [I can’t be bothered with the whole humility crap]. Or without words: the tablet held in the hands of Moses has been cut out of the picture. The essence of the teaching would appear to be: nothingness—or, an as yet unwritten story.

That which happens only all too easily is presented to the gaze in a drastic film by Rebekka Hagg, Komad’s sister, who is likewise an artist: though the young lady begins her day dressed in the white gown of a princess, even reading the morning paper already leaves behind the first traces of colour—emotional markings. The girlfriend, the telephone call, the sales woman and the fervent admirer—all of them invariably sully the cleanliness and clarity of her once immaculate appearance, entirely unnoticed by the young lady herself, until she finally encounters a kindred spirit. Naturally, they are no longer able to recognize each other as such.

The second guest that Komad has spun into her sturdy web has brought with her a precious gift: Zenita Komad’s heartbeat, recorded onto a record made of ice. If, each week, one of these were to be placed upon the turntable, the various tones would find themselves simply melting within minutes. Indeed, one has to be attentive when listening to the heart of another.

Mariahilferplatz 3, Graz, until 16. September. In July/August only Sat and Sun 11–5pm. (‘Die Presse’, Print edition, July 7, 2012)