

Yearning in a Familiar Scenery

There is a similarity between one's Heimat (homeland) and love: one cannot escape from either. It releases intense feelings. It makes one happy. And at times, one wishes to be as far away from it as possible. Both are profoundly rooted in the collective unconscious, where dreams and yearnings reside and where the first traces of consciousness develop. This is the place where images are especially present and influential.

It is at the boldly calculated neutral point of desire, ideals and a hopelessly romantic vision of an ideal world—developed in the face of a modern world that is seen as confusing and spinning in an ever increasing twirl—that the “Heimat” series by Anne-Marie von Sarosdy unfolds with motifs of virtually outrageous idylls. Quaint? Only at the first glance. Inscrutable? Certainly, anytime.

Kitsch, art, mental cinema: these photographs apply to all of the three—with a wink. They are fun. And yet, they are also slightly eerie.

With their strategically staged perfection and emotionality, the lusciously arranged idylls of Anne-Marie von Sarosdy can be described as courageous. The dreamy yearning of Romanticism and the revival of nature myths collide with the rigor of semantic emptiness; collide with our knowledge of the shallowness of iconographic promises.

The expertly staged photograph, fascinating us from the first glance, functions both as an icon and a votive painting. It depicts human archetypes, embeds them in an equally archetypically staged nature and thus elevates both. We are faced with magnificent mountain ranges and, in the forefront, bathed in golden sunlight: a maid and farm laborer uniting in a kiss; the upright valiant; the mother and child tinted in sacral, excessive hues of turquoise, pink and gold like a Madonna in the countryside; lovers in the hay; the huntsman in the green forest; or the young farmer's wife at the drinking trough, her quizzical glance directed towards the distance.

The art of photography of Anne-Marie von Sarosdy creates exceptional pictures that evoke an intense yearning within the viewer. It is simply impossible not to be attracted by the topicality and archetypal power of these photographs:

they are too close to our innate and ever-present wishes and desires.

Here, we have lust and honor, temptation and virginity, belief and sin standing side by side as equals, indifferent of any confession. Von Sarosdy adds a glittering dose of Catholicism in the form of a penitent woman, all clad in black, praying in an opulently decorated Baroque church. She is joined by curvaceous dairymaids with wheelbarrows recalling the horns of plenty, and muscular lads with milk buckets filled to the brim—“Honi soit qui mal y pense...!” (Evil to him who evil thinks).

The timeless encounters on alpine pastures are masters of subtle seduction: from the tension-filled quality of the scenery via the cinematographic lighting to the ornate frames, covered in depictions of edelweiss, cyclamen and gentian. Unlike the artificial paradises of the French masters of kitsch, Pierre et Gilles, the perfection staged by Anne-Marie von Sarosdy is tangible, it shows real people in real landscapes—and this makes it all the more attractive.

Exceedingly lavish and yet ironic, Anne-Marie von Sarosdy illustrates the manifold, complex, and often ambivalent feelings connected with the term “homeland.” Her picturesque epics give new life to subconscious dreams. As such, they relate to the current and very powerful tendency to occupy own, readily comprehensible spaces, become

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aware of one's individual history and roots, and setting these against the increasing global conformity of places of experience and patterns of life.

With their overly colorful reality, these photographs also compare to surreal, weightless rambles through imaginary dream worlds that invite us to yield to temptation. There is nothing lacking in these photographs. They are more than beautiful, more than real, more than present.

They take pleasure in crossing the borders of genres and conventions, thus opening a terrain for artistic photography that makes the provocative shine through the familiar, and that reveals more of our hidden yearnings than we generally like to admit to.

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