

A project by Megan Sullivan

Die Hunterklasse—Praxistipps für Reiter, Trainer und Veranstalter

Megan Sullivan with Susanne Kappmeier

Design: Werbeatelier Baurichter

German — 120 pp. — 190 x 250 mm — full colour illustrations

Publisher: Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, FN-Verlag, Warendorf

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Die Hunterklasse is foremost a curious object rather than a publication, an object that hovers around the border that divides what is art and not. The object is in a form of a book with a certain familiar style of writing and design, that is not definitely 'artistic' in any aspect. It is about a horse riding discipline called 'Hunterklasse', which has recently been introduced in Germany based on a popular American style of riding ('show hunter'). A little clue suggesting of that this object might be 'something' is the unlikely combination of co-publishers listed in the 'book': Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, a post graduate research institute in the realm of contemporary art, design and theory, and FN-Verlag in Warendorf, the publishing house of the German Riding Federation. What do they have to do with each other?

One person may quite readily accept **Die Hunterklasse** as art, or as "debris" of a certain artistic action and gesture, on the very ground that it plays with the concept of art, even if the meaning and value of such a work might be still be debated. Ready-made, appropriation, intervention, masquerade... just name a few possible strategies. These strategies might be mentioned as a form of research into a certain community and their social norms and behaviors while challenging a position of subject as artist-researcher as distanced and objective. Another may state that it is not art at all (!) but merely a practical guide that might be useful for developing a new form of leisure or hobby, an alternative form of horse-jumping. What art are you talking about?

The chances for an actual encounter between these opposing perspectives seem slim and they are mutually and equally exclusive of each other. As yet, one who recognizes these two possible approaches to **Die Hunterklasse** but does not completely identify with any of the two may cherish some pleasure and lessons. The context can define meanings (art or manual). Yet what if a context is not identifiable any longer? It is where a perspective emerges that leaves the arena of identification and opinion but opts for the field of exquisite curiosity and uncertainty. The duality of a subject and the non-schizophrenic, simultaneous play of two roles—artist/researcher and horse-rider—operate as an amusing reminder for the worlds that are divided into endlessly plural small worlds such as art world, horse riding world, chess world, academic world etc. The reminder also unfolds a condition for possible connection of those separated worlds in a form of absurdity and generous loosening as the beginning. It brings us even further to an area of practice, learning, self-discipline, not territorialized yet, which is required all life long to exist and live through. The below passages on the Jan van Eyck Academie and 'show hunters' from different sources suggest the possible neutral area of practice which we may form.

“...the Jan van Eyck is a space of questioning: the people who make up the academy take a critical and questioning stance and aspire to innovative cultural and visual production – be it in Fine Art, Design or Theory. They perceive, study, query, debate, negotiate, interact, experience, innovate, improvise, determine and create. They collaborate and forge alliances, explore constructions and their consequences and forge, test and drop or adopt concepts....” (From Jan van Eyck Academie’s Annual Report 2004)

“...A show hunter is not only judged on movement, but also on temperament and manners. Thus, the show hunter should always be relaxed and calm, yet attentive to its rider. It should be responsive to invisible signals and look relatively easy to ride.” (From Wikipedia’s “Show hunter” and the sub-theme “The Attitude”)

So **Die Hunterklasse** is an art project or a horse-riding manual? Or on top of this very status of “or”, this creates another world and therefore it is becoming “art”?

Binna Choi