



Duoen M/L, Marie Karlberg og Lena Henke arrangerer en av de mange uavhengige utstillingene i Venezia under biennalen. Vi møtte dem over et glass Aperol Spritz.

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We Need to Have Freedom of Love

Av [Maria Kjær Themsen](#)



Jaanus Samma. Foto: Maria Kjær Themsen.

Before entering the first floor in the Palazzo Malipiero, that hosts the Estonian Pavilion, we are warned that the show “contains explicit sexual images and may be found offensive by some visitors”. We may add that it not only depicts sexual organs, but depict them in such a way that even visitors who normally enjoy looking at naked people, will be put to the test. The show is about “the Chairman”, an Estonian man who was condemned for his homosexuality during the Soviet-era (1944-1991), and was eventually murdered, allegedly by a Russian soldier who also happened to be a male prostitute. This story functions as the point of departure for Samma’s project – one part dry archive and one part fictive and theatrically staged with an opera and several films, where the Danish-French artist Al Masson play the role as the Chairman. All in all a political and very sensitive staging, of a theme that to this day remains a taboo, and even a crime in many countries (Russia for example): homosexual lovemaking.

This is one of the most daring projects I’ve seen in Venice – what is your motivation to do such a show in this setting?

For me, it was interesting to talk about hidden histories. This story happened ages ago in Estonia, but all countries have hidden histories. The challenge is to make people interested in it, to reflect about and talk

about it. When we talk about human rights we often forget how quickly one situation can change into another. And this is where history come in: we can learn from it, in order not to repeat our failures and mistakes.

But the law against homosexuality is not history, it is still very much a reality in Russia for exemple?

Yes, and if we are not careful enough it will be future as well. We need to have freedom of love!

Have you seen any great shows yet?

I've only seen 2% so far, because I've been so busy to install the show, but I did have one hour at the Giardini yesterday. Here, I really liked the American Pavilion with Joan Jonas. It was so organic, and you could just go with the flow... And the Nordic Pavilion with Camille Norment was also very great. The sound installation was very beautiful.

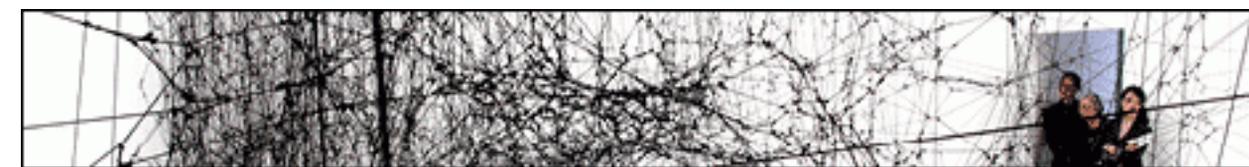
What have you been looking forward to the most?

It is my first time here during the opening days, and there are so much art and it so hardcore, but to be honest I've been looking forward to experiencing exactly this puzzle around the openings...

What will you work on when you return from Venice?

I will only start working on new projects after a summer vacation that I have been looking very much forward to!

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