

Ladies and Gentlemen,

More than ever we have today to insist on women's right to their enjoyment. For in the long history of women's suppression, women have all the time been denied their joy: be it

- their *sexual pleasure* (some men even thought that such a thing did not exist at all; while others acknowledged its existence, yet tried to prohibit women's access to it);

- or the *aesthetic pleasure of their artistic creations* (for a long time it was taken as granted that only men could be artists), just as the *pleasures that stem from observing art* – , for example, the visual pleasure that women can enjoy when watching movies;

- or the *innocent pleasures of women's everyday life* – just think of the small embellishments that women regularly delight to bring to their homes: a bunch of flowers there; a little colourful blanket here; a bucket with fruits on the table; a funny little figurine on the window sill.

The proverb, "it takes a woman to make a home", as ambiguous as it may sound for a feminist's ear, still testifies for that specifically feminine pleasure. Also these little innocent pleasures that brought beauty to women's immediate environment were often enough denied to women.

Just think here of the terrible crimes committed by Modernism. Modernism in architecture – a business mostly run by men – set out to flush away all the precious little documents of women's domestic passions. Thoroughly male geometric glass constructions aimed at relentless transparency and utter emptiness – precisely at places where women preferred to hide and to delight in their little secret passions, for small charming things that could fill those places.

Only recently this conflict between an entirely male fanaticism for emptiness that mistook itself for rationality, and the more hidden feminine passion for small, apparently silly things that may remind one of tender memories, got discovered. Feminist architecture theorist Sabine Pollack has elaborated on this in her seminal book "Empty Spaces. Femininity and Habitation in Modernity":

"At the beginning of 20th century," Pollack writes, "the interior of the lodgings – the place with which women had identified themselves – got systematically emptied out from all feminine attributes." (Pollak 2004: 17)

Pollack's research provides a gender dimension to the famous thesis formulated by German sociologist Max Weber more than 100 years ago – the thesis of the "*disenchantment of the world*". What has taken away the little charms from this world has been a sinister male fervour. It has been men who delighted in removing everything that could bring delight. Men disenchanting the world from women's charms. An utterly silly move – to the disadvantage not of women alone, but at least as much to that of men themselves!

As far as I understand the lovely *Dissident Goddesses' Network* endeavour, I think one can say: What is at stake here, together with female enjoyment, is precisely *women's ability to be divine* – an issue that has actually been, by the way, well recognized by some men; or

rather: male transvestites. Just think of the hilarious drag queen named "Divine" who acted so lovely in famous movies such "Female Trouble", "Pink Flamingos" and "Polyester". Women, when they are not suppressed, can really develop a kind of divinity – a quality for which they have been admired and venerated for ages; just think of your wonderful "Venus" of Willendorf. Yet we must not fall into the trap of men's shortsighted Modernism: We must not mistake female divinity for irrationality. Quite on the contrary! Female divinity, is, I am tempted to say, precisely what makes life worth living for! Emptying the world of this quality is the most irrational move one can make - and one that only men, I think, are able to. Max Weber was clever enough to see this clearly:

"Specialists without spirit," he writes, "and hedonists without a heart: this Nothing imagines itself to have reached a never before attained level of humanity!" (Weber 1988: 203)

Female divinity, we must conclude, is not the enemy of human reason. To the contrary, there is no such thing as human reason if it does not allow for the apparent little follies by which women know how to make the world a better place.

Ladies and Gentlemen, not only from the perspective of 19th century's class struggles, but also from a contemporary feminist viewpoint, we must claim today, with the words by German poet Georg Buechner,

"peace to the small cabins, war to the palaces!" –  
"Friede den Hütten, Krieg den Palästen!" (please forgive me for my bad German).

We must today defend the small places of feminine passion in the first place. For women's divine creative spirit has today still to face hostility when it dares to go out into the public space – just think of the many troubles with the police that Miss Ungepflegt had to endure when she, most courageously, installed her "ministry of home filth" in a public square in one of Vienna's outer districts this summer.

So it is no wonder that the finest and most subtle blossomings of feminine genius are still to be found where almost nobody is prepared to find them. At their homes, or at their workplaces, or wherever else women today feel comfortable. "A room for one's own," as Virginia Woolf has famously put it. I have learned here that you have even a special word in German for such places where one can feel safe - you call it a "Leo", isn't it?

To my opinion, it is a most clever move by the Dissident Goddesses' network to look for the proofs of this feminine creative spirit precisely where it still may blossom best. Has anyone ever bothered to look, not just for art made by women, but for the secret places where women's creative energies can flow and expand?

From my viewpoint, as an outsider, there are therefore three parties here today that have to be congratulated:

In the first place, of course, you, Miss Ungepflegt, for your excellent and most amazing work. I am sure, your office must be a delight and an inspiration for everybody who has the chance to visit it – even for men, I assume.

At the same time one has to congratulate the Dissident Goddesses Network for so perspicuously searching for the feminine genius precisely where it likes to dwell.

And not to forget, one has to congratulate the leader of this wonderful institution – you, your magnificence Rektor Ms. SYCH. I must say, I was not surprised to learn that this university is lead by a female director. I assume, men, and male university directors will still have to learn a lot until they achieve the same level of generosity and subtlety that you have already proven – by encouraging young female artists in your institution and letting their creative genius blossom so freely.

I congratulate all of you and thank you for this most precious experience.

Thank you.