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Deborah Sengl HOME STORY

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The Viennese artist Deborah Sengl (born 1974) describes the development of her new series "Home Story" as follows:

„A while ago, I saw that a so-called Facebook friend of mine posted a photograph he shot of a homeless person. Apart from the fact that this is in violation of his personality rights, he did not do this out of compassion. On the contrary, he verbally insulted the person lying on the floor and mocked his sad fate."

This kind of ignorance and self representation in the face of the suffering of others, unfortunately, is not an isolated case. The perpetual sense of crisis in our times—most currently the drama surrounding refugees from war-torn Syria and other problematic countries, extensively covered by the media—give rise to manifold fears with regard to our own affluence and a narrowly conceived cultural identity. The simultaneously growing gap between the haves and the have-nots turns us into blind combatants desperate to save our own skin and our own prosperity.

In almost all countries wealth and poverty coexist in close proximity. Consumerism gives us a sense of safety, of being part of a seemingly functional society. Brand products reaffirm our respective affiliations and bestow a deceptive status. In our search for material gratification, however, we very often lose sight of those among us whose existential range ends well outside of the gates of our temples of consumerism. By closing our eyes to these nuisances they remain invisible and do not weigh on our conscience.

In the series "Home Story" Sengl juxtaposes the two extremes of luxurious affluence and abject poverty. The topic of sleeping or having a home play a much a role here as does the thoughtless treatment of people at the fringes of society. Sengl's series encourages us to think about the corsage of our insatiable greed for possessions. It emphatically raises the question whether the social pressure accompanying this addiction might not actually come at the expense of our freedom, and thereby make us poor in a more profound sense. And whether its opposite—if devoid of false romanticizing—might not be the more honest form of existence.

Sengl expressly states that she is not in a position to offer a quick solution for all the injustices of our times. But her works urge us to cast a more open and more emphatic view at our environment, and that would already be a very commendable first step.

Deborah Sengl has spent many years examining and analyzing structures of society and human survival strategies. Critical questions concerning relationships of power and dependence, as well as the interplay between perpetrator and victim, are essential corner stones of her work. From 1995 her works have been exhibited regularly in Austria and abroad.

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