

JENS HAANING (DK) SUPER DISCOUNT

September 6 through October 18 1998

Danish artist Jens Haaning, born 1965, lives in Copenhagen. His works refer to various critical phenomena he observes in our society - racism, the quest for a personal or collective identity, political and business strategies, power and violence but also impotence and despair. He makes use of Duchamp's strategy of "ready-mades", though instead of using objects he works with real-life situations. His installations blend the functional and the esthetic in an effort to compel the viewer to take an active stand at more levels than one.

"As an artist, Jens Haaning feels he is at the fringes of our society's social and economic structures. Instead of lamenting this particular status, he decided to put it to good use. All those who - in any way whatever - also feel marginalized, are invited to join him in his activities." Marc-Olivier Wahler, Kunstbulletin 9/1998

For the Fri-Art Super Discount installation, Jens Haaning pursues a line that targets business strategies. He initiated it last year with his Travel Agency project in Berlin. On that occasion he transformed an art gallery into a travel agency; visitors could buy a plane ticket at less than the market price, the artist having modified its status.

In Super Discount, Jens Haaning focuses on various aspects of our economic system - the purchasing power of people in different countries, economic relations between states and of course Switzerland's peculiar position on the outskirts of the EU - and modifies the status of each piece of goods. One of the most radical artists in current art practice, Jens Haaning leaves reality almost untouched. Minor details aside, visitors to the show will find themselves in a supermarket much like the one they usually patronize.

By transposing a range of goods from a supermarket to an exhibition space reserved for art, Jens Haaning in no way negates their consumer value; he adds to it an artistic dimension with political connotations. Imperceptible to the viewer, this installation's new dimension lies in the global process of its realization. The fact that Jens Haaning exhibits these products-art-works in Fri-Art endows them with a status that encompasses all the administrative steps taken to import them. Superdiscount prices are the result.

Jens Haaning's art evokes a political problem that has been much discussed of late. He does not want his work to be viewed as a provocation however. All he does is show economic mechanisms through the prism of art, while using the language of money in an attempt to voice his doubts concerning "issues of public interest" and "his own existence". He would like to expand the public's views on the possibilities of art.

PERSPECTIVES

In this century there have been a lot of movements in the art-field trying to bring the art in a closer relation to other aspects of reality, but art has kept a special status, comparably to other scientific fields like archeology and chemistry and physics.

Normal people who are given a special status are not complaining about it, the king is not complaining, and I am not complaining about my special status as a white global citizen or about having a Danish passport instead of a Bulgarian or about having the possibility to let my art works pass any national border.

Super Discount does not intent to change the art mechanisms or other society mechanisms in any general or specific way. The ambition is to make a statement of a, for me as a global citizen, relevant thought. Jens Haaning, August 1998

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