

Foreword

by *Mik Ezdanitoff, Fashion Philosopher*

The squatters' movement, for me as an outsider, formed an intense yet chaotic united front of people among whom no disparities existed. This uniform solidarity was more than just a trompe-l'oeil-effect caused by the equalizing visual overkill which an intently riotous mass or an enthusiastic horde rocking by creates. It always had to do with the fact that they actually looked the same.

The clothing of the movement looked sexless (thus »masculine«), dirty and ripped. There were hard patches and nasty stains on it, PLO shawls, thick mountain shoes and motorcycle jackets went with it, and it was complemented by a strong-smelling blend of gasoline, sweat and beer traces. Except for the short, black, real leather jackets, the squatters' dress did not distinguish itself from the big-city street fashion of drug addicts and alcoholics. Just as the outfit of wandering junkies and drunks, through falling and getting up from obstacles like the gutter, acquires just that extra touch whereby it differs from the by-the-kilo fashion of the welfare-case lumpenvolk(ital.), so the squatters' clothing acquired its antisocial aura simply by going out squatting. Whichever parts the brought-from-home basis collection was assembled out of, through DIY, pulling, pushing, lugging and the squatters' slapstick and art, it was unavoidably transformed into a complete squat wardrobe.

Squat dress resembled the work clothes of miners, chimney sweeps and tanker cleaners. It looked at least as rough and filthy, only it couldn't be traded in after work for a designer sweat suit. Because the movement was against social power strategies, like the division between the boss' time and free time. There were no fixed working hours, or something like that.

Squat dress also borrowed something from survival equipment. It too was all-purpose clothing, could stand a skirmish, was designed for every atmospheric fluctuation and was non-seasonal. While the survival uniform actually sets out to be able to stand a confrontation with the elements of wild nature, squatters' dress was intended to withstand the material dialogue with the elements of big city power culture in a reasonable way. During the disinterested staking of one's own body and the throwing of household articles, the displacement of furniture from the street and the lighting up of homemade projects, the heavily falling-to-pieces and many-layered squatters' clothing offered direct protection against the city's obtrusive powers.

Although squat dress was from the street and afforded one an identity, it did not become a fashion. It differed in this way from punk attire and the working-class look. Because the last two made up a part of squat dress, we can talk of some scene formation inside the movement. Thus the self-conscious corduroy jacket of the public park service could become an anti-society garment. Fashion is that which can be bought in clothing stores. Where fashion always socializes, squat dress was not available in stores, and was thus antisocial. It hung nowhere, lay nowhere, but sat in garbage cans. It demonstrated besides a maximum of bourgeois impropriety, and this free of charge at the cost of the taxpayers' community. Squat dress was more than action clothing; it was itself an action.

If squat dress wasn't social, what was it? With its dark looks it brought to mind the national-socialist fashion hues. Nevertheless, the movement attached no value to its dress and, as I see it, dissociated from it in cases of panic, while the fascist suit is a strictly personal, symbol-plastered parade costume from which separation is psychologically difficult.

ADILKNO's Movement Teachings makes no attempt to legitimize crowd spectacles after the fact by giving them a social twist. Neither is it a history book, though it's chock full of bizarre and absurd anecdotes; it is above all a textbook in which the concepts of mass and movement are set against each other chapter by chapter according to the method of applied casuistry. The Teachings are thus prevented from turning into social therapy. This is also how they have escaped being theoretical acrobatics. The theory, the Movement Teachings, is radically raked away and swept together in the opening and closing chapters. What remains of theory in the chapters in between is the manner in which certain events are or are not described, and the connections between the different descriptions. Through this »absence« of theory the engrossing stories which thus arise achieve a remarkable clarity. At the same time the Movement Teachings are distinguished by a swift pace. They produce a racket bringing to mind the bells and whistles of the squatters' acid house parties, while in contrast the new social theory prefers the silence of the funeral chamber. The smoke which the Movement Teachings (like any good theory) expel smells not of incense, myrrh and gold dust, but of tear gas, tires and mattresses. The smoke of the movement is not a cloud masking its shortcomings, but a signal that something's going on. And we are there.

Ulrum, January 1990