

„DO YOU MIND.“ A LINGUISTIC INTERVENTION IN AN URBAN SPACE

Frauke Ellßel in *Baltic Drift*, published by Ursula van den Busch/GAK-Satellit, Bremen, 5/2006

While on an investigative walk through Riga, Astrid Nippoldt discovered a statue of the Roland. It seemed to her that a plaque giving information about its historical meaning was missing. Nippoldt filled this gap, entering the memorial into a dialogue with its environs. She placed letters on each side of the statue's base forming four questions: „Do you mind if I freeze?“, „Do you mind if I spit?“, „Do you mind if I cheat?“ and „Do you mind if I quit?“. The phrases shift in meaning from pranks to suicide, from insolence to empathy. Formally, they hold together, almost too naturally, by their phonetic rhythm that rings of a children's rhyme.

But what remains open is who is doing the questioning and who is being asked? Are the questions coming from Roland's mouth, as a challenge to the politicians at the city hall, to the citizens or the visitors to the city? How do they relate to the memorial's symbolic character of stately representation and expression of citizen self-confidence? Are the sentences meant to challenge the by-passers to be interactive or are they just another slogan engraved in the superficial realm of our environment, essentially invisible? The work uses the foundation of the statue as a basis for multidimensional instructions, and as a projected surface for a possible dialogue between by-passers and the memorial, the state and individual, superficial script and inner engravings, and not least of which being between artistic intervention and public spaces.

Translation by Sarah Stephens