

Broken Dimanche Press, Ireland/Germany, 2011, 340 pages

»Les Readymades« est certainement l'un des meilleurs premiers romans européens des dernières années. John Holten y raconte l'histoire de trois amis serbes qui essaient d'oublier, à travers l'art, les horreurs de la guerre et des crimes qu'ils ont perpétrés. Ceux-ci décident de fonder le groupe LGB, une association d'artistes qui connaîtra un énorme succès dans les galeries d'art internationales dans le roman ... et dans la réalité.

The Readymades uses and abuses a number of literary genres. In this confident debut novel, Holten has extrapolated a whole missing art movement and their contemporary European picaresque saga.

The action begins during October 2008 in Paris, with John, a young Irish publisher, meeting the jaded Serbian artist Djordje Bojić. Bojić tells John about the manuscript he is writing: the history of the LGB Group – an Eastern European neo-avant-garde collective that arose in the turbulent environment of mid-1990s Belgrade, when Bojić and his friends, recently returned from the war in Bosnia, started to produce art in order to escape the hysterical nationalism all around them.

Bojić's manuscript makes up the final part of the novel. Starting out as an academic attempt to document the LGB Group, the sober attitude of the art-historical account soon collapses, and the narrative gradually turns into a disclosing life-story of violence and existential decay. As the manuscript moves closer to the horrific truths of Bojić's own war experiences, the testimony gradually fails, becomes full of mute lacunas in order to finally reach the ineffable climax of the testimony: the aphasia of trauma, the dumbness of loss, and the ultimate silence of Bojić's own death.

Presse:

»Holten's novel is one of the greatest works of art to come out of Berlin in recent years ... You could say that LGB are the Next Big Thing to come out of Berlin, the timely projection of an embattled nexus – East versus West, the Real World versus the Art World, Purity versus Commodification, Literature versus the Visual Arts, Fiction versus Truth.« - Travis Jeppesen, Art in America

»Politics, art and literature get together in a perfect mix of novel, documentary text and art catalogue. The edition, beautifully designed by F.U.K Laboratories, elevates this novel to a piece of art in itself.« - Eva Gonçalves, mono.blog

»The Readymades by John Holten: easily one of the most ambitious, interesting, well-executed novels by an Irish writer I've come across.«
- Rob Doyle, author of Here Are the Young Men

»Holten has expanded the scope of the contemporary novel so that it is not merely a comment on the present but a set of artistic strategies and processes sent out into the world at large.« - Brian Dillon, UK editor of Cabinet magazine

**John
Holten**

**The
Readymades**

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»The Readymades is an outstanding debut novel, as humanist in content as it is refreshing in form. [Holten] manage[s] to travel through a community that has not been but dimly aware of it as such, this wide European generation, as much victims as willing participants in a possible but unsure unification of the nation-states. The penniless, privileged heirs to Rimbaud and the League of Nations (...). At the same time [Holten] map[s] out guilt and its consequences – and these two are intertwined: [he] draw[s] our geography with guilt for ink, deep black.«
- Haukur Már Helgason, Icelandic author and literary critic