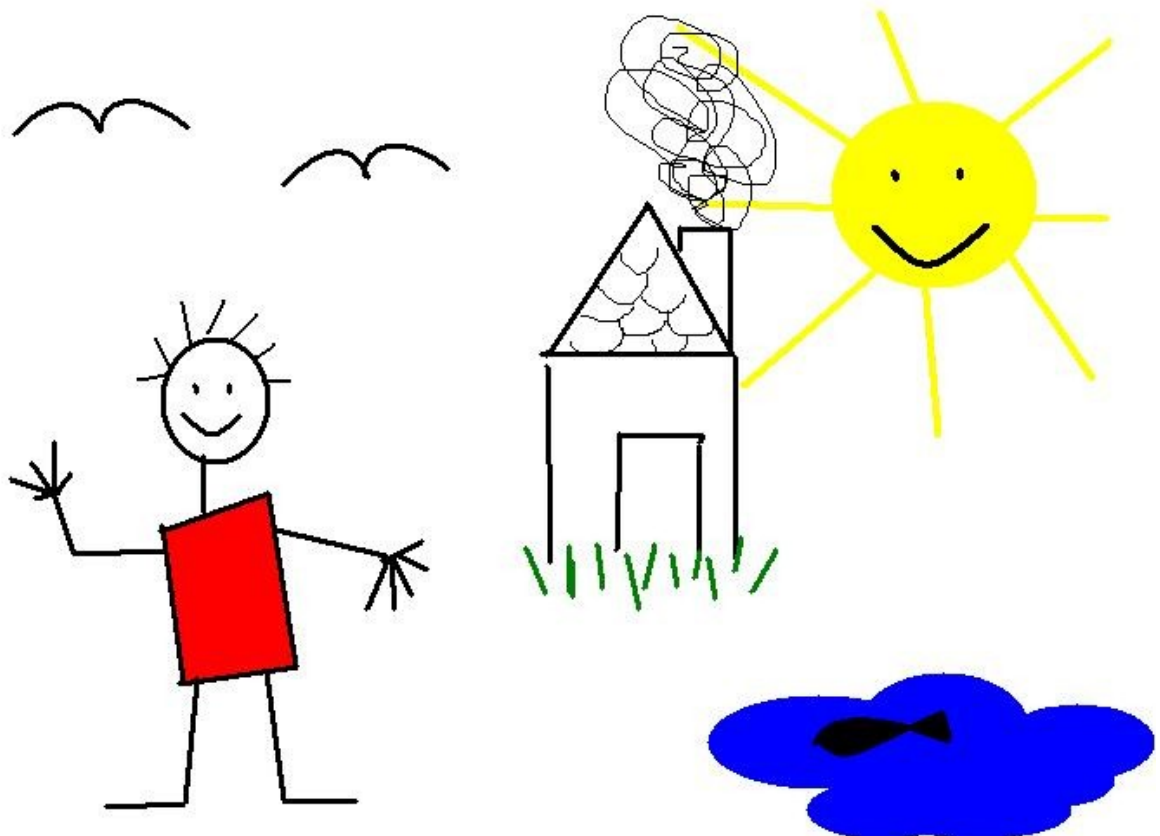


Irgendwie Kunst

(It's art ... in a way)

A mini larp by Martina Ryssel and Karsten Dombrowski



General description

All participants of this Larp are visitors of an exhibition where paintings of the artist Artemis are displayed. The exhibition's name is "Around the World in 80 strokes". Five visitors have just gathered in front of one of those paintings. These are:

The artist Artemis
The mute child Jessie
The critic Mr./Mrs. Simmons
The Diva Roxy/Rocky
The social worker Haley

All five persons know each other, for longer or shorter periods of time. Suddenly, all gets dark around them and the five of them awake in the middle of the painting they were just gathered in front. Now they are trapped inside it.

As if from very far away, they can dimly see other visitors, but they can in no way communicate with them.

This is more about the present and the relation between the characters amongst each other than about the past. Thus, it is not important to know who had what for breakfast yesterday or who is how old exactly.

About the game

"Irgendwie Kunst" (It's art ... in a way") started as a joke. It was on MittelPunkt 2008 (and off course it was at the last evening in the bar), when we realized a child's painting ... the (nearly stereotypical) house, sun, m-shaped birds and stick-figure. And suddenly we both got the creative flash of "hmm, what about a scenario, playing in a child's painting..." – our way to try to do something "as-weird-as-the-Finns". But during our planning of the game we were as well inspired by Matt Ruffs novel "Set this house in order", about dissociative identity disorder. So this contributes at least as one possible interpretation of the game theme ...

Notes for game master

By now we have run the game three times. At least one run turned out really cool (and one more or less lame), but we still only know that we know nothing about this game. So the following ideas are just suggestions.

We always preferred an “extensive” use of game masters incursion into the game. After the game started, we tried to keep as much outside the game as possible – watching, but between start and stop only interfering by changing the lights (see character descriptions).¹ This we did quite often (every minute or so) to get a certain dynamic conflict into the game. It helps to watch the players and game, as you will notice situations where you just want one of the characters to take the lead.

Regarding the “resolution” for the game, we just reacted to the actions of the players. The most expected outcome for them is to make the child draw a key to the fabric house.² Maybe by first forcing Artemis to confess he “stole” the pictures of his brother. If this happened, we ended the game. Another possible solution we thought of was somebody taking one of the painted birds to lock-pick the door. Anyway, we think you should be open for ANY resolution players come up with – or none at all. In this case you should stop the game at the moment you get the feeling it is becoming boring.

Character distribution

We tried out both “type-casting” players and letting them choose the characters for themselves. It both works more or less, but we think that it’s important to have a good player as the mute child and the social worker. And a very nasty critic. If those three are played well, the game should work out fine.

Before the game

We distributed the characters very shortly before the game, and that works without problems.

If you don’t want to repaint all the walls, it helps to hint at the players that it is only allowed to get props dirty, nothing else.

If you don’t have enough players, we recommend not to use the Diva, but you shouldn’t leave out any other characters.

To enhance the feeling of being suddenly sucked into the painting, we had the players close their eyes and led them into the room, positioning them randomly and giving them their piece of props only then.

¹ In earlier versions, by changing the music – but this really failed, so do not try it ...

² By using the “water” and the paintbrush of Artemis. Our plan was also, that people should convince Simmons to give his review to paint on, but this one never happened. They always just drew the key on the fabric house ...

Handout (for all players)

You are visitors of an exhibition, where paintings of the famous artist "Artemis" are displayed. The exhibition's name is "Around the World in 80 strokes". You are one of five visitors, that just gathered in front of one of those paintings. These are:

The artist Artemis
The mute child Jessie
The critic Mr./Mrs. Simmons
The Diva Roxy/Rocky
The social worker Haley

All of you know each other, for longer or shorter periods of time. Suddenly, all gets dark around and you awake in the middle of the painting you were just gathering in front. Now you are trapped inside it.

As if from very far away, you can dimly see other visitors, but you can in no way communicate with them.

Note

This is more about the present and the relation between the characters amongst each other than about the past. Thus, it is not important to know who had what for breakfast yesterday or who is how old exactly.

The artist Artemis

Short description

It is your pictures that are displayed at the exhibition "around the world in 80 strokes" - allegedly. The truth is that you are in a creative crisis and most of your pictures there have been "borrowed" from your small sister/brother (the mute child). Of course, no one should ever hear about that...

Thus, you hide your incompetence and the child cannot get anything out of those paintings anyway. The custodian of your sister/brother (the social worker), however, sometimes asks dangerously critical questions...

This new simplicistic linearism, as your style has been recently called, seems to be very well received with most critics. And to impress critics and fans a very important mission for you on your way to the very top...

Character traits

You are vain, full of yourself and a mean egotist.

Miscellaneous

When the red light shines, your bad character traits should be emphasised. During this time, you should try to take over the dominant role in the game.

The mute child Jessie

Short description

A few months ago, you just stopped talking. Only sometimes, you softly sing children's songs to yourself to calm yourself. You fell silent from the time when your big brother "Artemis" stole one of your paintings to sell it as his own. Now dozens of your paintings are hanging in this exhibition. On the one hand that hurts you, but of course you don't want to betray him, he's your brother after all, and you should love him...Therefore, you decided to say nothing at all anymore.

The critic, who is obviously not very fond of your brother's art, seems to be a way out of this predicament. If he finds out that the paintings are yours, you won't have betrayed your brother...

You have come to the exhibition with your custodian, the social worker. He annoys you, because he tends to ask uncomfortable questions and wants to bring back suppressed memories.

Character traits:

You are afraid of the dark, the unknown and the hidden. Also, the diva with her uncontrolled bouts of anger scares you.

Miscellaneous

When the yellow light shines, your bad character traits should be emphasised. During this time, you should try to take over the dominant role in the game.

(You might want to tell the child's player that he can decide to talk again if he thinks the moment is appropriate for it)

The critic Mr./Mrs. Simmons

Short description

You have very recently published a slating review about the exhibition as well as the artist Artemis himself. His new simplicistic linearism, as his fan community has recently begun to call his style, doesn't appeal to you at all, and is simply an expression of deepest incompetence.

Divas like Roxy/Rocky unfortunately are a necessary evil in the art scene.

You don't have a hand for children at all, they don't fit into your structured way of thinking and just don't have a sense for art theory. And social workers, as everyone knows, tend to destroy more than help with their pedagogic hubbub.

Character traits

You are the uncooperative but rational sceptic, who tends to cast doubts on everything at first.

Miscellaneous

When the blue light shines, your bad character traits should be emphasised. During this time, you should try to take over the dominant role in the game.

The Diva Roxy/Rocky

Short description

You don't understand the least bit about art, but you are at the exhibition to bathe in the light of important people like the artist and the critic. Although you are as yet undecided as to who is the more important one...

When you are not in the center of things, you quickly become insufferable. The fact that the artist's little sister/brother is here angers you, because that one draws far too much attention away from you. On the other hand, you do know that a decisive voice and stern glance can discipline children quite fast. If only that incompetent social worker knew that as well...

Character traits

You are a cynical bitch, short-tempered and tend to uncontrolled bouts of anger in certain situations (see below)

Miscellaneous

When the green light shines, your bad character traits should be emphasised. During this time, you should try to take over the dominant role in the game.

The social worker Haley

Short description

You are a social worker, and your current charge is the mute child Jessie, with whom you are visiting the exhibition of his/her big brother. The child fell silent only some months ago, and no one knows the reason. You think it's your job to get the child to speak again, but up to now, he/she blocks all your tries.

The ambivalent relationship between your charge and his/her brother is obvious to you. As the suspicious social worker you are, and having experienced too much already, this relationship, as well as the child's behaviour towards the Diva and the Critic all seem very suspect to you.

Character traits

You are a sensitive hero. Even if some people tend not to know that they have to be saved. Everywhere and in everyone, you scent danger for your little charge.

Miscellaneous

When the white light shines, your bad character traits should be emphasised. During this time, you should try to take over the dominant role in the game.

Props we used

As we are just not-yet-enlightened representatives from an underdeveloped larp culture, we still think props are a nice thing to have for a larp. Feel free to rearrange as much as you like

Random surrounding

We had a great, big, fabric house frontage, from the days of Martina's childhood. Together with some improvised m-shaped birds (cardboard) and a big, smiling sun (also cardboard) it really helped to get our players in the scenario.

Lock

At the door of the house we fixed a big lock (in the MittelPunkt version, it was a big door of a vault). This symbolized the locked-in-the-picture part of the story. People soon realized they had to get rid of this lock.

Water

To offer them the opportunity to paint something, we set up a small pond (a bowl with blue paint in the middle of a large blue towel)

Lights (or sound)

As stated among the characters, in the last run of this game we linked the mood of the characters to the colour of the light. This light-thing is just optional. We used it, because Knudepunkt offered a room with an advanced light-system. It worked out quite well, because we were able to "navigate" players a bit (by deciding who is dominant at a precise moment). Although this is optional, it helps quite a lot to create a dynamic game.

Just be sure not to make it too confusing for the players. For example when we tried to reach a similar effect with different kinds of music, it drew too much attention away from actually gaming, as people tried to listen to what kind of music is just playing. But lights, also, should be distinguishable and not too fuzzy.

The Review (Mr./Mrs. Simmons)

(we printed this out on a sheet of paper originally intended to be used for drawing the key on)

Too simple

There are moments when even the most experienced critic loses speech. The revelation of a masterpiece of unheard-of creative power may be one. But more often this is the case when he must turn his head to escape from the badly crafted products of audacious and impudent torturers of brushes. "Around the world in 80 strokes" by the highly acclaimed drawing talent Artemist unfortunately is another example for the latter case. This piece of "work", which tries to show the world from a childlike perspective, consists of a boring accumulation of infantile line drawings without any meaning. Even the grandiose name of "simplicistic linearism", that was given to this style by naive members of the artist's clique, cannot hide that fact. Save yourself the time for this exhibition, and buy your child a painting book instead. Artemis himself could use that kind of professional literature.

The paint brush (Artemis)

Just a paint brush. An option for getting out of this picture (for example if the players convince Jessie to draw a key)

The doll (Jessie)

A soft, fabric doll for the mute child – so it can express him-/herself by hitting other people ...

Optional: a short description for visitors

On MittelPunkt 2009 we tried some kind of an „open door policy“ for non-participants. The door of the room we played was barred with a rope – simulating a barrier of an exhibition, preventing visitors from touching the pictures. To avoid disturbance from the non-participants, we posted the following note at the door (and used our mystical game masters power to handle visitors not following these rules):

Around the world in 80 strokes

Home Sweet Home

Artemis, 2007

The painting "Home Sweet Home" shown here shows the childlike perspective on safety and warmth of the parental home in unforeseen simplicity. What could be a better starting point for a journey around the world?

Please behave quiet and civilised, don't touch anything and mind the line. Please remember to remain absolutely silent within our rooms.

Still, we don't think it's an important part to the game, as the players never really reacted to the visitors.



Pic: J. Tuomas Harviainen

About the Authors

Karsten Dombrowski and Martina Ryssel met years ago and instantly hated each other. Karsten says Martina is a self-centered, cynical bitch who doesn't know anything about the finer points of Larp organisation. Martina says the same about Karsten. Nobody knows why they still organise Larps together...

If you nevertheless want to get in contact (to ask nasty questions about Irgendwie Kunst, tell them about your own boring games or just use this game description as a cheap excuse to hit on one or both of them), just search them on facebook.

Acknowledgement

There are some people we should thank:

A poor friend from Israel, that had to stand a long evening with two giggling Germans next to him, refusing to tell what was that funny.

Jtuomas for decorating us with the "Juhana-Pettersson-award" for weirdness in game design, after the first run of Irgendwie Kunst.

All weird nordic larp wrights, who inspired us to write a game "as Finnish, as German larp can be".