

When does behaviour cross the line?

Ludwig

JANA ANTONISSEN

In 'Ludwig', Mira, the central character, looks back at her time in the company of Ludwig von Sachsenheim, a famous director and artist. Years ago she decided to abandon life in Brussels with her father – her mother died young – and to join Ludwig's social-artistic experiment in Berlin, the Neue Gesellschaft. The aim of the experiment? To make possible a new form of society, always on camera, a kind of artistic variant of *Big Brother*. The experiment runs aground, however, when its founder Ludwig is taken to court for sexual intimidation, subsidy fraud, indecent assault and violation of labour laws.

A novel that depicts today's world in all its disorientation and ambiguity. *****

KNACK

Several years later, when a journalist approaches Mira, she looks back on the part she played in the dynamics of the Neue Gesellschaft, where freedom, drugs and sex were celebrated. Secrecy and rituals, under intense group pressure, bound the participants together. But there were also group sessions in which members were humiliated and subjected to accusations, the way that happens in sects. Because of her frequent audiences with Ludwig, Mira felt superior to the rest of the group, until she fell out of favour and suddenly had to answer for her behaviour when the community broke apart.

A courageous novel about how art can still push back frontiers in our own day.

DE REACTOR

Dramaturg and journalist Jana Antonissen based the novel on her experiences with the controversial Russian director Ilya Khrzhanovsky. She shows how power both attracts and corrupts. The question of whether she is a victim or an accomplice is central. It turns out that Mira, who on the one hand can be seen as a victim of Ludwig and of group sex under pressure, feels a 'perverse pleasure' when she takes over some of Ludwig's tasks. With 'Ludwig' Jana Antonissen has written a rich and original novel of ideas that explores complex themes including the abuse of power, moral ambiguity and toxic relationships.



AUTHOR



Jana Antonissen (b. 1992) is a journalist, columnist and author. In her interviews, reportage and essays she always shows an interest in human beings and their motives, in the personal stories behind current events. In her columns, which appear several times a week in *De Morgen*, she playfully puts our contemporary norms and customs under a magnifying glass, never sparing herself. Photo © Rebecca Fertinel

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