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It will not be discussed in this issue whether Swiss Meteorologist Jörg Kachelmann's disappearance from German TV screens has anything to do with the unusually wintry weather this season. But one can say that these days, it is devastating for a prominent man to be accused of having raped a woman – as it is happening to Julian Assange of WikiLeaks, too – in a similar way as it was in the Middle Ages for a woman to be accused of witchcraft.

Chris Schuster

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Winter at Christmas time – without Christmas kitsch

The concept of Christmas market has become a favorite export to countries that had been spared of it up to now. The offered knick knack comes almost exclusively from China – except glühwein.

Winter-Splashes

Much snow had fallen all over Europe by the end of November, too early for the German law requiring snow tires, a law which came into effect December 4th 2010. The Federal Minister of Transport, Building and Urban Development, Dr. Peter Ramsauer stated on



TRUCK ACCIDENT: Few drivers of large trucks have undergone training how to drive on ice and snow, resulting in serious accidents on the road.

Instead of a review of the year 2010 a few musings about winter put together like in a kaleidoscope

the eve of the requirement for snow tires: »As we could see over the last few days, winter is wreaking havoc on German roads. Motorists using inadequate tires put themselves and others at risk. A lot of drivers have already installed suitable equipment. As of tomorrow, the law requires all drivers to equip their vehicles with winter tires when driving on slush and slippery surfaces due to ice and snow, black ice or white frost. If they fail to do so, they will be fined.«

Winter tires become mandatory

After the Bundesrat approved the amendment to the German Road Traffic Regulations as proposed by the Federal Minister of Transport Ramsauer, the

fine will be twice as high as previously if caught with summer tires during the aforementioned wintry conditions: 40 € instead of the former 20 €. If, however, the car should then obstruct traffic, the fine will be raised from 40 to 80 €. Additionally, the offender will also receive one penalty point in the Central Register of Traffic Offenders. <<http://www.bmvbs.de/SharedDocs/DE/Artikel/StB-LA/bussgeldkatalog.html?nn=60616>>.

Winter tires have become mandatory for motorcycles, too. Motorcycles may not be operated on roads covered by mud and fresh or melting snow unless they are equipped with tires whose tread pattern and structure are designed to ensure a performance better than that of a normal tire in the above mentioned road conditions. If operated without such tires, they constitute a hazard to road safety.

Despite winter tires becoming mandatory now it does not automatically mean you have to put on those tires under any circumstances, all winter long. If a vehicle with summer tires is parked on the street whether for a limited amount of time because of bad weather, or permanently during the entire winter season – , it may stand there unmolested, without fine. Also, one may drive with summer tires if the area has no history of snow or ice during the winter months.

There are people who own two (or more) cars, with one fitted with summer tires, the other one with winter tires. According to weather conditions, they choose the vehicle equipped with the suitable tires and have always the best performance in terms of grip and comfort. Also, one may want to keep in mind that the higher the temperature above the freezing point, the greater the wear of winter tires. There can be had all purpose tires but those aren't perfect, neither in winter nor in summer. No tires exist

yet, which can adjust automatically from heat to ice conditions. And don't forget: only snow chains will do in deep snow.

On the Autobahn: for hours in traffic jam

Looking at pictures showing the situation on wintry roads one has the impression mandatory winter tires have had no positive effects at all. In the news they report almost every minute about jack-knifed or overturned lorries, and heavy vehicles breaking through the center rail, clogging traffic in one or both directions. The announcements are rather useless if one is in a traffic jam on the Autobahn some kilometers trapped behind an accident.

A traffic jam on Autobahn A1 of 185 kilometers (115 miles) happened in Nordrhein Westfalen on the morning of December 17th when the low pressure system »Petra« caused heavy snowfall. Between Leverkusen and Wuppertal, some 25 kilometers (16 miles), the Autobahn was completely closed. People trapped in their cars got blankets and hot beverages from the Red Cross or the national help unit Technisches Hilfswerk.

Warnings go out now to people that not only when starting out for a longer journey should they carry blankets, something to eat and drink in the car but also when driving shorter distances. Even if they intended to leave the Autobahn at the very next exit, it could very well happen that they may be trapped in the cold for hours.

Germany, no fairy tale on the railway

Passengers on the trains are no better off than those on clogged roads, or closed airports. But getting stuck on board of a train becomes a shared ex-



BEAUTIFUL VIEW: *the beauty of a snowy landscape does not change, but here is a difference if you watch and enjoy it from a moving vehicle or see it stuck in traffic at subfreezing temperature.*

perience compared with loneliness in cars no longer mobile. Nevertheless, in these days reporters have heard horrible stories from passengers. They didn't enjoy the fairy tale landscape with occasionally dotted Christmas trees and a winter wonderland thinking »I am dreaming of a white Christmas ...«

Indeed there was never so much snow at Christmas since 1886. Instead the passengers suffered from overflowing toilettes, diapers in wastepaper baskets overflowing, vomit spilled in the aisles. Strange enough the train operator DEUTSCHE BAHN cautioned travelers to not take the train during Christmas week

while the airlines recommended to stay away from chaotic airports and rather take the train instead... which obviously led to mutual finger pointing. The safest traffic in ice and snow is the traffic on the internet but even here, Skype went out of service for almost two days worldwide during this period, to the fury of tens of thousands of users.



Limit global warming: Wish or Science

During winter weather not to use the expression *climate* it would be nice if temperatures in Central Europe were a little bit higher. And now, 192 states have agreed on the UN-World-Climate summit in Cancún to limit by law the rise of temperature to no more than two de-



Clouds and snow: solar panels without sun with weather like that no »renewable« energy is provided.

grees Celsius above the ones reported in 1850. What megalomania! Do we know how and where temperatures were recorded during this era? And where they will be in the future? Do you weigh readings in White Plains and Watauga the same way as in New York and Nairobi?

No doubt there is no denying that resources, energy, soil together with flora and fauna need careful treatment. But also, human beings need to be cared for, especially when it comes to children's education, including rule of law and freedom of press. The optimistic prognosis that one day solar panels on German roofs would contribute substantially to the supply of energy ignored the fact that the sun doesn't shine during the night and yield is next to nothing during winter time even on sunny days in winter the yield

might just be sufficient for ironing a couple of shirts but only during mid day.

If the solar energy collectors are covered with snow, as we have had now for a month November / December 2010 in the Rhine-Main-Area, one must be grateful for nuclear power plants independent of fuel supplies across closed roads, blocked rails and frozen waterways.

King Lear, a drama – as performed in Frankfurt!

Recently I went to the nearby city of Frankfurt, some 30 miles away. I had purchased a ticket for the drama *King Lear* in advance which includes free public transportation in a wide area, with in a time span of five hours before begin and five hours after end of the event. I left home in dry but fairly cold weath-

er early afternoon to catch the tram and then the connecting S-Bahn (suburban train), which takes one directly into downtown Frankfurt. As intended, I first strolled leisurely through one of the many museums in downtown Frankfurt.

Then I met with friends who would join us for the play, for a light dinner before the performance, in a restaurant under the same roof as the theatre. Our conversation drifted towards the exhibit I had chosen. I said: »While others go to a Peep Show, I was confronted with quite audacious prints entitled THE LUCID EVIDENCE (see more further on) at the Museum for Modern Art.«

The first snowflakes had started to fall when we entered the restaurant, Fundus. By the time the waiter asked us about desert which we had to decline – a heavy snow blanket had already covered the place in front of the theatre building. When I took my coat from the wardrobe I asked my friends where theirs were. They said: »We didn't bring our coats – why should we? At home we got into our car in the basement garage. Then, in Frankfurt we drove straight into the parking garage without having to step outside at all.« But a few steps in the deep snow outside, to get around to the theatre entrance, convinced them to change their mind quickly. What would happen if after the play, they'd get stranded in their car, in the middle of the night, in the middle of nowhere? Walking lightly dressed to the closest village in the Taunus Hills? On the spot, they decided to return home immediately and rather miss the play, even if that meant to forfeit excellent tickets, in row number six.

In hindsight, skipping the play *King Lear* FRANKFURT STYLE was a wise decision of theirs, for two reasons: First the roads were still open; but even

though, it took my friends almost three times the time they'd spent earlier on their drive to Frankfurt. Secondly: The mise-en-scene of Shakespeare's King Lear by Günter Krämer was exceedingly dull. Instead of a play, it was rather a *dis* play. Instead of flowing regal outfits the so called costumes were nothing more than black sacks. The actors were standing around, almost unmoving, and cited the text sometimes in a voice too subdued, sometimes too forceful, but always difficult to understand.

The empty stage, with only an entirely black backdrop, did not inspire, either. Had stage designers and craftsmen fallen to the axe of cost savings, one was tempted to ask oneself. Sad to say that the regal drama about power and loss degenerated here into a petty family quarrel about a demented father.

Michael Kluger writes in the newspaper Frankfurter Neue Presse about Michael Abendroth's performance of King Lear: *»Where desperation attempted to topple a universe, so as to push it into an abyss, there is here nothing more than an impotent delirium in senility. Here do not roar monumental torments of humanity, no, here blows the numbing, freezing breath of a solitary fading away. Krämer the producer has provided us with a rough evening: barren, depressing ..., and too small to be of Shakespeare.«* Gerhard Stadelmaier in the newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung didn't have any kinder words to say about Günter Krämer's production: *»In the Frankfurt production, an accountant type, in a bathrobe, takes a kind of autistic, blasé time out during which he moves around if at all like a depressed, sluggish bag, himself in a stage of pre insanity without compensating poetry, between energetically drawn red curtains, the latter activity just to show to the audience: you are in the theatre now. But really, no one knows what is being played on stage it's a*



world of gaga boredom, this includes the producer. His name is of no importance here.«

The Lucid Evidence

The Museum for Modern Art is situated between the shopping street Zeil and the river Main, densely compressed into a quarter of buildings left over, shaped like a wedge of cake. What the house lacks in width it gains in height. Strangely formed staircases from where one can look at the objects of art from various tilts lead to lofty galleries. Right at the entrance, prints of the photographer Nobuyoshi Araki (born 1940 in Tokyo) are displayed in chess-board like style. The

Nobuyoshi Araki:
*photo portrait without title
 from the series TOKYO COMEDY
 1997
 Copy out of a brochure to the
 exhibition »THE LUCID EVIDENCE«
 Museum für Moderne Kunst
 MMK*



Artists of the Exhibition
The Lucid Evidence
until 25. April 2011

Nobuyoshi Araki,
Heiner Blum,
Larry Clark,
Stefan Exler,
Peter Fischli/David Weiss,
Günther Förg,
Noritoshi Hirakawa,
Barbara Klemm,
Mike Mandel/Larry Sultan,
Ryuji Miyamoto,
Anja Niedringhaus,
Dino Pedriali,
Taryn Simon,
Jock Sturges,
Oliviero Toscani,
Abisag Tüllmann,
Bettina Rheims,
Thomas Ruff,
Beat Streuli,
Miroslav Tichy,
Jeff Wall,
Tobias Zielony.

Museum für Moderne Kunst
MMK, Domstraße 10
60311 Frankfurt/Main

fields contain female nudes and every day scenes in a regular pattern. The female acts are obscene and shocking, if one is confronted with them, unprepared, for the first time. I felt uneasy to watch Araki's intimate shots in the presence of other people. I would rather have preferred to first see the reproductions in one of his books, at leisure, unobserved. Araki's books – he is said to have published more than 350 – would be a better way to slowly appreciate the artistic arrangements, but all of his books were safely stored in shelves behind glass.

One must mention here, that Araki gave all of his published work to The Museum for Modern Art. His beautiful women, most of them tied exquisitely with Japanese ropes (Kinbaku), express a cool glamour. The arrangements are not comparable to the ordinary bondage pornos western style. Kinbaku is considered an erotic art that combines the Japanese obsession for elaborate wrapping and the art of arranging flowers (Ikebana). Araki says he shows a woman's beau-

ty in captures, but he can only tie up her body, never her heart. Anyway, Nobuyoshi Araki's nudes capture every spectator!

After such a firework of eroticism one tends to forget about the other pictures of the MMK collection. E.g. the small prints of a modern housing area in different seasons – a superb observation of Peter Fischli and David Weiss disclosing the banalité and correctness of Swiss suburban life but enriched by the omnipresent nature

The journalistic works of Barbara Klemm, Anja Niedringhaus and Abisag Tüllmann are deeply disturbing and recollect the cruelty of situations, which one felt when reading newspapers and magazines at that time.

Getting home late that evening was uneventful – the chaos on rail and road had itself played out while the drama of KING LEAR FRANKFURT STYLE was performed indoors. ■

Impressum



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Photo: Martina Pipprich, Mainz

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