

Josip Novosel, *The Good Boy*

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Everyone wants to be a good boy and in the sincere eyes of the dog is written exactly that: It is me, I am a good boy. In the paintings of Josip Novosel, who was born in Croatia, raised in Bavaria and now lives in Berlin, at first glance there is a sense of peace and comfort. Also a caring concentration and attentiveness. The images are flooded with golden color spectra of sunsets and also a very special feeling of human grounding which arises at the sight of these pictures. The man is sitting comfortably with his dog in front of the fireplace, relaxed, letting the sun shine on him, the furry dog warming his lap. A yapper leads the jogger through a gracefully inked fir forest. The day comes, the day goes, he remains a good boy. "Gays don't want to be gay, they want to be as stuffy and kitschy as the average person. They long for a home sweet home where they can inconspicuously enter into a marriage-like relationship with an honest and faithful friend. The ideal partner must be clean, honest, and natural, an untouched and fresh boy, as sweet and playful as a sheepdog." A quote from Rosa von Praunheim's film "It's not the homosexuals who are perverted, but the situation in which they have to live." But what awaits after the retreat into the private sphere? What does it mean to grow older and live beyond nuclear family models? How do I design myself as a man, how is tenderness sublimated?

Single men, some of whom have such strong calves that no one can paint as fantastically as Josip Novosel, know an answer: Woof. Sit down, good boy. They have all found a suitable role for themselves. Yet the scenes in Novosel's painting seem to come to us both from the now and from a timeless space. Everything seems to have always been like this. No other domestic animal has managed, like the dog, to situate itself in the closest proximity to humans. However, the exact beginnings of this relationship are still unclear, no one truly remembers who the first housepet was. What did one expect from the closeness of a different species? Yet was it even humans who domesticated the wolf, or is the power imbalance not so obvious after all as history tells us? The central protagonists in Josip Novosel's painting are sitting next to men, obeying, panting, running, these unconditionally loving dogs. Perhaps it was them, in fact, who one day went into action and decided to seek the presence of humans and appear here in the paintings as its protagonists.

In the "Portrait of a man with a dog" a night-black shadow hangs on the face of the commanding person, moments before they enter jointly through the door at home. The persona, wrote the analyst C. G. Jung, is "a compromise between the individual and the societal on what one appears to be". No one walks around without a mask, he would also be poorly advised, it would not be bearable for the others. We all carry our masks around like walking the dog. To know yourself, you have to study your night self, the deep shadows of Josip Novosel's painting seem to whisper to us.

*Maurin Dietrich*