

Dear Rachael,

Thanks for your letter, and that in three languages, I was impressed. Unfortunately, I can only reply in German, as my English is difficult for such sensitive matters, and it seems you have someone who translates correctly.

Of course, I find it sad because making the mural was really an honour for me. And it was fun. I still receive pictures from gay comic fans and tourists alike, who climbed on top of the dog toilet to be able to have a picture in front of little „Paul“ of the mural, holding up their T-shirts :). I am especially irritated because racism and transphobia deny EVERYTHING I stand for! I have been drawing comics for some 40 years and then you have a long time of societal background and contents. People say that I am tough when it comes to sexuality, but that I have always treated my characters lovingly. Of course with stereotypes, they are comics, caricatures. But here too: I don't expect the younger generation to know my books and stories, surely not in Brussels. I don't even know if the French version is even visible in Brussels. It is just not a nice feeling to be misunderstood that way.

What is easiest to understand is the displeasure about the black woman. But I want to assure you that there wasn't the slightest racist thought when I was drawing her, not even unconscious. On the contrary, for me she is self conscious and powerful. And the lips are red, because she shows her lipstick with pride. I had no other intent in this. „*Not intelligent and absent*“? Of course you can view it through colonial glasses, or one wants to see it that way, and maybe that is what should be done where possible. I didn't do that, but OK, if people feel ridiculed or offended, then it should be changed.

The accusation of transphobia with the other figure remains completely hard to understand. I did not even think about a trans person, a trans woman! For decades my comics have been full of so-called 'Trashy Aunts,' queer drag queens, who want to be queer. I don't think a lot about things, I mainly draw what I see and what I experience myself. This type of person can be seen on all the travesty podiums of the world. It's what you can see in the CSD parade or here in Cologne whom you can see parading around in high heels at Carnival). She is what Divine used to be and what Little Britain is. I was a drag myself, and the consciously unattractive was part of the fun. She is not looking sad, she is even looking debile, and that is what she wants. It is even highly unusual to have to explain this. I suspect that the next step will be to criticize Drag Queens and Transvestite shows because, as they exaggerate, they will be considered women- and trans-unfriendly. And on top of all that, she is fat. Fat people do exist, they are all part of it. On my side, there is not the least bit of mockery or hostility. On the contrary, I often picture fat hairy men, because I happen to find a thick hairy male belly sexy. There may have been at least misunderstandings on both sides here. I thought the Rainbowhouse had asked me to make a mural and I assumed they knew what I make and what I am all about.

Of course it is sad, but OK for me, if you want to ask "another artist" to redo the wall. Between the lines, I can read that there is a need to do so. It seems that there must have been a lot of excitement about this within your organisation. Thanks for the information and passing it on to me, but it is your wall to do with what you want. It's just that I can't and I don't want to change my drawings. As I mentioned before, such people with thick round

noses have been living in my comics for ages, and for a long time I have found a lot of sympathy from gays. And now I should retouch it, paint over, clear it?

It is OK that younger generations see things the elders haven't seen, or did not find important. That is the way things go. I find it sad to be so misunderstood, but I can live with it if you prefer to have the images painted over.

Best regards from Cologne,

Ralf