

## A Rather Sacrilegious Nickname

The next day, Antonia travelled to Frankfurt to visit her father and see some shows. On the train, she padded through an interview with a famous artist on her phone, which discussed the artist's method of casting non-professional actors in her film works.

She, the artist, read out a few of the ads she'd placed in the local newspaper:

*Talks to self in the mirror  
To Develop scenes of intimacy  
Sing your own song at elevated volume, the  
song can be written by someone else  
Wants to play and engage*

Many of the works were filmed on the streets of Miami. The location was apparently some kind of art world rebuke, since Miami had no real art market apart from the big fairs. "Outsiders can't get over the heat", this artist explained. The characters in her work, despite the open calls, were always similar in build: fit, smooth and shaved, shiny. There was the green ocean dotted with luxury yachts and bounded by a bleached boardwalk. The editing from one shot to the next made the city go on and on, one hot form exploding into the next. There were squat stucco apartment buildings, but also glinting skyscrapers with lots of space from one building to the next. Thrumming pop music leaked out from gigantic bars, "I just need somebody to love..." which mixed with loud brass, and lots of passersby had their shirts off. *What can we do together? I need to hear what they care about, so they can hear what I care about.* There were lots of cars stopping off at heat blasted gas stations, surrounded by Hibiscus trees with heavy flowers, so many gas stations: Valero, SunShine Plaza, Sunstop and across the street were the clubs with their imposing sound systems.

A DJ stands behind a towering complex of speakers, his head pushes into his shoulder blade, it carves out a small cavern for his ear and cheek, which become a tight axis. Partygoers inside wonder loudly whether their work needs to be flashier, bigger, louder too:

*How do you sell work here?  
You need to get representation out of state.  
The money's in painting. Video too.  
Someone told me South Beach was half  
abandoned in the nineties.*

Is this the real deal? Antonia thought to herself. The train had been stopped in tunnel for some time. The conductor reported a sizable delay; there were people on the tracks near the outskirts of Cologne. Antonia gleaned from a woman sitting across the aisle that the people were actually environmental activists protesting the expansion of the biggest strip mine in Europe. "What are they mining?" Antonia asked. "Lignite," the woman answered. She seemed to know a lot.

Antonia moved away from the artist interview, and searched for pictures of lignite, or brown coal, on her phone. Brown coal is wrested like a body from a crook in the earth, then sent around the world to light homes and buildings. The stuff's probably everywhere, maybe it's in Miami:

*Ship it to Miami, boys.  
One ship full!  
Let's light up the night sky!*

Is that how it worked? Antonia wondered, she wasn't sure. Maybe she should ask her fellow passenger. No, she didn't want to commit to that kind of conversation.

Antonia looked at her own face in the mirrored train window instead, at her flat broad face with a beakish nose and full planar lips, the top lip was identical to the bottom. Dad's lips. All the adults surrounding her as a child reported that she precisely resembled her mother. The background characters were blurred. Why do Germans like Florida so much? she thought to herself. Antonia had been there twice on vacation as a child, once before her parents split, and then alone with her father to visit one of his school friends. Several years later she had realized this friend was in fact a girlfriend. *Scenes of intimacy. How ridiculous.* She thought about her father in his apartment, no more secret girlfriend in Florida. He had moved home to Frankfurt nearly 20 years earlier, and now for some time they were less than a half days journey apart, though Antonia usually needed a pretense to visit.

The train jerked into motion then, and quickly began to emerge from the tunnel. Antonia remembered her South Florida tan lines; the pattern on her back, part burnished and freckled and then perfectly pale. Returning home, she was an imposter, with only the sunned parts showing.