

Passion Play

The Eriskay Connection, 2023

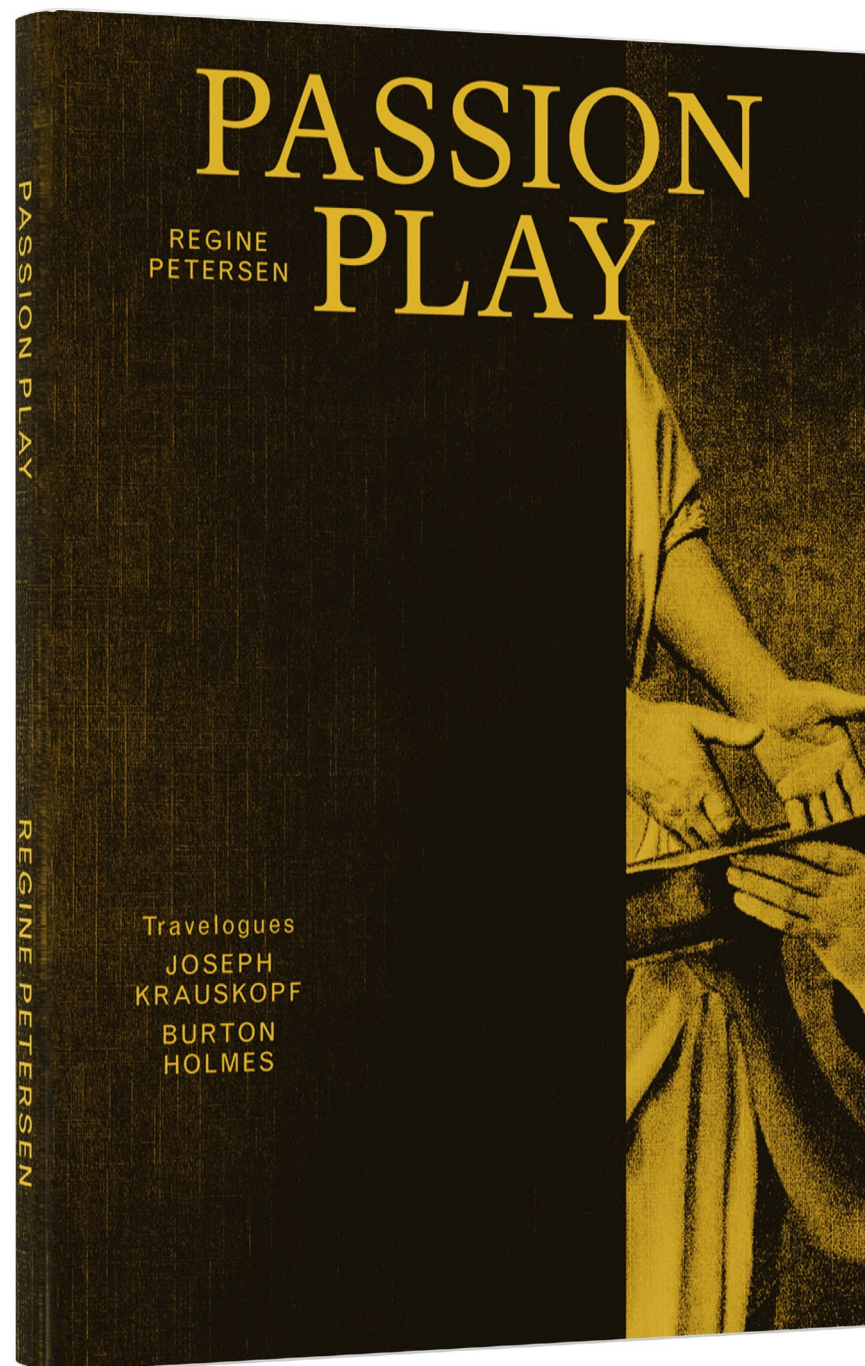
In the 17th century, the citizens of Oberammergau made a covenant with God. If he halted the plague, they would reenact The Passion of Christ every ten years for eternity. When the deaths ceased, in 1634, the villagers fulfilled their promise and the first Passion Play was staged.

Petersen's image-text montage takes as its starting point Adolf Hitler's attendance of Oberammergau's tricentennial Jubilee in 1934. The narrative unfolds on two levels: that of the world's most prominent Passion Play and its inherent antisemitism, and that of daily life in the National Socialist village. Postcards of the Play's protagonists are interwoven with travelogues, local police records and denazification protocols, gradually undermining their propagandistic function and blurring the boundaries between the solemn stage and a disquieting historical reality.

Composed as an allegorical tale with satirical nuances, »Passion Play« is a reprisal of History's passions for propaganda, populism and moral corruption in their shifting albeit ubiquitous manifestations.

Hardcover

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They have their ambitions, like other people, but no ambitions of a worldly nature. Their fondest hope is to be found worthy to play a leading part in the Passion Play; their highest ambition is some day to play the part of Jesus or of the Virgin Mary. For these parts the children seem to be trained from their very cradles. Life has no higher object; heaven itself can have no higher honor.



I had heard of the emotional and hysterical outbreaks on the part of some of the spectators at the sight of the outrages perpetrated against the Jesus of the Passion Play; I had heard that some had been so wrought up by the play as to become temporarily insane, and run about town haunted by wildest hallucinations.



AN'S KREUZ
MIT IHM!

One would never have thought that the little village of Oberammergau sheltered nigh unto five thousand souls within its three hundred cottages, that August night when I was its guest, so motionless it lay, in the midnight hour, along the banks of the Ammer. Not a sound was heard save the rushing of the rapid-coursing stream and the occasional rumblings of rolling rocks in the mountains above. Long I sat at the open window, peering out into the night,—thinking, querying, prophesying. I was in a Biblical frame of mind. Saul-like, I had strayed among the prophets, and their spirit was upon me.



Passion Play's 'Lead' Admits He Was Nazi

FRANKFURT, Nov. 17 (AP)—Anton Preisinger, the man who has been chosen to play the role of Jesus Christ in next year's Passion Play at Oberammergau, today confirmed that he had been a Nazi.

He said he joined the party in 1932, before Hitler came to power, and added that a denazification court had adjudged him a follower—the mildest type of Nazi—in 1947.

Preisinger made the statement in reply to an article appearing in the U.S. High Commission newspaper, Die Neue Zeitung, which said his former Nazi status had provoked heated discussion in the little village. The village casting committee had turned down one former Nazi for the role before electing Preisinger last week.

Termed 'Nonsense'
He described the Zeitung report as "a lot of nonsense," and added: "People should stop talking about these things."

We see the Christ in prayer upon the Mount of Olives; we witness the betrayal and the capture, and then we follow the high priests and the rabble to the palace of the Roman governor. »Christ before Pilate« has given inspiration to many a painter, but never have we looked upon a grander conception of the scene than is realised on the broad stage of Oberammergau.

