



The Dresser

Original title: Påklederen
 Publisher: Forlaget Oktober, 2023
 Genre: Novel
 Pages: 192 pages
 English sample

Foreign rights

Swedish: Heidruns Förlag
 World English: Seagull Books

Awards

Vårt Land Book of the Year 2023



Thorvald Steen

Photo: Trine Hisdal

The Dresser

Intense chamber drama about betrayal and sin

The year is 1204. Massimo Gasparino was once the most trusted aide to the Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, but he has now been demoted to a dresser and is being held captive by the Doge in an apartment in Constantinople.

Gasparino writes a secret letter to Pope Innocent III in which he professes that he's witnessed the most egregious crime in human history: the Fourth Crusade to Jerusalem has deliberately been redirected to Constantinople. The city is plundered and the loot transported to Venice. Gasparino writes about the vast extent of the betrayal and the sin, depicting one of the greatest disasters in Christian Europe.

The Dresser is an ambitious novel about betrayal and sin, and about a war that continues to cast shadows over modern-day conflicts.

Steen writes precisely and exceptionally wisely – and with a hint of humour and beauty. He plays with the novel genre, storytelling, and the epistolary form with mastery and elegance. *The Dresser* is an intense and heartfelt chamber drama about vanity and overzealous ambition, about powerlessness and guilt.

The Dresser has received glowing reviews and been listed among the best books of 2023 by several critics.

Thorvald Steen has transformed a history lesson into a dramatic story. He has also expanded our awareness and understanding of the powerful passions and forces at work behind catastrophes and wars. He has done this through the tightly spun and precise revelations of The Dresser. ... Conveyed in an understated and precise literary voice, the author demonstrates yet again how history's catastrophes can be reflected in the individual's most base and brutal qualities. The Dresser is also an illustration of the relationship between master and servant. Knowledge is not always power; it can also be your downfall.

Dagsavisen

Steen has written an ambitious novel based on little known historical events that had enormous consequences for posterity... I don't think I am the only reader who, after finishing this epistolary novel, was left with the desire to read more about the historical events and consequences of what took place.

Vårt Land

Through his novelistic art, Thorvald Steen has long been an educator about overlooked or

forgotten events in European history. In The Dresser, he takes us into one of the greatest catastrophes in Christian Europe: the Fourth Crusade in the year 1204. This is a fascinating epistolary novel about ruthlessness, betrayal, and the plundering of the world's richest and most powerful city, Constantinople. Europe was never the same after this.

Vårt Land, Book of the Year 2023

...the plundering of Constantinople and the pivotal year 1204 have been brought to light thanks to Thorvald Steen's new novel The Dresser. In this book, the historical events are not merely a backdrop; they are the very foundation of the novel... Steen portrays the events of 1204 from a surprising angle by stripping down and examining the man who can be considered the mastermind behind the destruction. He accomplishes this through the horrified observations of the protagonist, Massimo. Many of these observations are detailed physiognomically, allowing the reader to come uncomfortably close to one of history's central, yet for most people completely unknown, figures.

Klassekampen

Thorvald Steen

Thorvald Steen's (b. 1954) literary career began in 1983, and he has since produced a diverse body of work spanning a variety of genres. Translated into 30 languages so far, Steen has received praise and prizes for the quality of his authorship in Norway and abroad.