

BJARNE MELGAARD „CHICKENHAWK“

Opening on Thursday, November 20, 2008, from 6 p.m. as part of the Seilerstätte: Vienna Plus.

Introduction by Dr. Beate Ermacora, director of the Kunstmuseum Mülheim an der Ruhr.

Duration of the exhibition: November 20 2008 – January 16 2009

Following the exhibition “Minipigs in Space” (2006) the Galerie Krinzinger is pleased to once again present a one-man show of Norwegian artist Bjarne Melgaard. Born 1967 and now based in New York, the artist has drawn attention since the beginning of the 1990s with his radical works.

Sculptures, photographs, drawings, paintings, installations, environments, furniture and texts are part of his artistic output, which generally focuses on the dark sides of man - both psychologically and physically of man. Death pain, sadomasochism, self-mutilation, drug consumption, escapism and murder fantasies all come together in Melgaard’s oeuvre – an explosive mix that has often pushed his exhibitions to the limits of legality. His uncompromising transcending of boundaries and taboo violations are grounded in the reality of his personal life on the one hand, while his works revolve around identity and its construction on the other.

Self-discovery, self-invention and representation of the individual is strongly manifest in both subculture and high culture, and both can be found in Malgaard’s world replete with extremes. Here various worlds collide along with personal experiences and subjective projections, while the glamour of a fetishist culture of fetishism and luxury clashes with the existential discrepancies of a brutal reality.

He mainly describes this world by means of his painting. It is expressive, yes, even snotty, and more recently appears in colors that the artist combines in a flashy way. Malgaard juxtaposes the quick gestural brushstroke on the surface with almost drawing-like, graphical elements that delineate the surfaces, but also create structures that blended over the paintings as sort of drawings. What Melgaard creates here are paintings that can accommodate for the intimacy of the drawing, while they also assert the monumentality and physical dimension of painting.

A recurring motif in Melgaard’s works is the Chihuahua which here also appears in the pictures with the attributes of sadness, innocence, sensitivity and an implied abuse. Malgaard likes to compare the dog with his role as an artist: “Being an artist and exhibiting your works is like asking to be raped – you are showing yourself completely.” And this is just how it feels when you stand in front of the series of works that revolve around dialysis. Blood is cleaned here, sick bodies are cured. The body is no temple, as Melgaard makes clear to the onlooker. One of his works has the subtitle “Self-portrait as a paranoid building”. Catharsis here is a different word for the constraints of being, the state of being tethered to physis and psyche: two states that are decisive for the development of sexual instincts, as we find again in the title “Chickenhawk”. (“Chickenhawk” used as vernacular in the American and British gay scene to refer to an older man with a predilection for younger partners.) A sexualized physis is also what Melgaard presents in the form of a clay sculpture: a “Cock Monster”, a figure that is entirely covered with penises stands there admonishingly, along with a further almost amorphous figure out of clay covered with bumps and ominously lifting an arm. Four further sculptures round off the show. Male figures with long hair, Heavy Metal fans posing: one is poised to stab another one in the back, while another figure holds up a dog up, a third figure a Mano cornuto, while a fourth figure points forward its over-sized, deformed penis. So it is certainly a classical Melgaard exhibition: sexuality meeting with death, vulnerability with brutality, punk with high culture. The show is rounded off with a series of furniture designed by Friedrich Kiesler and covered with patterned fabric specially designed by Melgaard.

Bjarne Melgaard, born 1967 in Sidney, raised in Norway, lives and works in New York. Solo exhibitions (selection): Greene Naftali Gallery, New York (2008), *Minipigs in Space*, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna (2006), *Hallo Maybe*, Haugar Vestfold Museum, Oslo (2005), *Scam*, Bergen Kunsthall (2003), *Black Low*, MARTa Herford (2002), Galerie Krinzinger (2001). Group shows (selection): *Paul Thek – Werkschau im Kontext zeitgenössischer Kunst*, ZKM, Karlsruhe / Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg (2007/2008), *Euro-Centric. Part 1*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2007), *Beneath the Underdog*, Gagolian Gallery, Madison Avenue, New York (2007), *PLAYLIST*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2004).