

JONATHAN MEESE

ERZCERAMICS DE LARGE (ABER BITTE MIT SAHNE)

4 February - 6 March 2021

Jonathan Meese (°1970 Tokyo, lives and works in Berlin and Hamburg) is renowned for his multi-faceted work, including wildly exuberant paintings, installations, ecstatic performances and a powerful body of sculptures in a variety of media. Apparently effortlessly, he has developed in all genres an independent and at the same time unique vocabulary that gives his work a variety, visual energy and quality which, according to Robert Fleck, has been unheard of since Picasso. All of Meese's work share a humor tending towards the grotesque, as well as a powerful, original creative will. Both are driven and supported by a striving for a rule of art, the Dictatorship of Art. What is meant here is the development of a new world order where art is the legislative power, and free play the foundation of all life and creation. This utopian approach runs like a leitmotif through all his works and brings his individual parts of the oeuvre together to form the Jonathan Meese Gesamtkunstwerk. He does not aim at anarchy, but rather the rule of metabolic necessity: 'Art is total play.' From this principle, he deconstructs, ornamentalises and caricatures all forms, words, and symbols, stripping them of their original semantic meaning.

In this exhibition ERZCERAMICS DE LARGE (ABER BITTE MIT SAHNE) Meese shows a new series of ceramic masks. Although all of Meese's work flows from a philosophical position he has defined for his artistic pursuit, sculpture is the way he gives permanence to his ideas. His bronze and ceramic figures are essentially surrogates for Meese and the various guises he assumes as well as for the forces of good and evil that he channels when he performs. These ceramic masks combine elements of painting with sculpture and are made with gestures that suggest the artist's sense of play as an essential part of the work. They stem from a personal mythology that combines forces of good and evil drawn from ancient times, history, and contemporary popular culture. He often refers to various villains from science-fiction and pop culture, such as from the films Zardoz, James Bond and A Clockwork Orange. With these references, Meese strives to exorcise evil from the world.

Jonathan Meese has exhibited globally with museums and leading art galleries including solo shows at Pinakothek der Moderne, München; Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Hall Art Foundation, Holle; Vienna; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; GEM, The Hague; CAC Málaga, Málaga; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; De Appel Center for Contemporary Art, Amsterdam; group shows at Holstebro Kunstmuseum, Holstebro; Museu de Arte de São Paulo, São Paulo; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; National Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow; MARTa Herford, Herford; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art Center, New York.