

## Press Release

### **John Bock**

*Ex-Ego-Gynt*

November 18, 2023–January 27, 2024

Public Reception: November 17, 6–8pm

Sprüth Magers, Berlin

**Sprüth Magers**

The works of sculptor, action artist, filmmaker and author John Bock are experiments in material and language that challenge the traditional boundaries within the art world. Bock composes spectacular and absurd structures wherein he stages his lectures and films. Sprüth Magers is pleased to present a solo exhibition by the artist, which will transform the gallery space into Bock's characteristically unique artistic cosmos and premiere his latest film alongside several new objects and an installation.

John Bock collaborated with Lars Eidinger to develop a visually powerful play based on Henrik Ibsen's dramatic poem "Peer Gynt." It premiered at Berlin's Schaubühne in 2020 and serves as the foundation for Bock's latest film. Against the backdrop of Peer's home farm, featuring a milking parlor and an enormous udder made from pullovers sewn together, Eidinger, clad in loud costumes, plays an outsider who fabulates the story of his life, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. The farmers' son turns into a present-day con man and lunatic: a greed-crazed finance type ("Finanzhai-Heini") in a pinstripe suit with literal deep pockets and a mad scientist explaining Ted Kaczynski's "Unabomber Manifesto." Unfolding between neologisms and onomatopoeias, objects, acting, and a sculptural set is a complex and humorous web of references and associations that refuses to be read in one particular way.

In the center of the gallery space is an installation. Stretched athwart a wooden panel lying on the floor, four ties form a cross and somewhat of a stage for one of Bock's lectures about parapsychology, pleasure and death. Here, too, the artist places equal emphasis on word and image. Complemented by a plexiglass panel on which objects and Bock's coinages are connected diagrammatically to tripod-mounted boards by red threads, the installation becomes a collage of superimposition and compression.

The walls are lined with vitrines: the so-called boxes ("Kisten") made from vibrant red and blue colored modules alternate between open and semi-open segments. Inside are wooden carvings of Bock's grimacing head, as well as objects cast from aluminum. Together, the small sets form a scenic sequence. A cautious optimism reverberates through both form and content, contrasting the artist's strange and gloomy pictorial worlds of past years.

Visitors move between the different stages that establish a dialogic relationship with one another. The exhibition *Ex-Ego-Gynt* showcases John Bock's unremitting expansion of the concept of art that keeps on recontextualizing the processual, ever-changing artwork and continues creating new networks. What emerges is a cohesive universe marked by an interest in madness, the uncanny, and the human psyche, but also by humor and exuberance, which constantly realigns the framework of its own perception.

John Bock (\*1965, Gribbohm) lives and works in Berlin. *"Peer Gynt" by Henrik Ibsen, A Main-Brain-Drain-Drama by John Bock and Lars Eidinger* (premiered on February 12, 2020) is in the Berlin Schaubühne's current repertoire. Recent solo exhibitions of his work have been shown at the following institutions: Kunsthalle Mannheim (2019–20), Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin (2019), Fondazione Prada, Milan (2018), Contemporary Austin (2017), La Panacée, Montpellier (2017), Berlinische Galerie (2017). Selected group exhibitions include Kunstmuseum Bonn (2022–24), Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen (2021), Marta Herford (2017), Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2016), Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (2016), Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015), 55th Venice Biennale (2013), Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (2011), and Documenta 11, Kassel (2002).

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