

GALLERI
NICOLAI WALLNER
JAKOB KOLDING
Balancing Acts

08 | 11 | 2013 - 20 | 12 | 2013



Galleri Nicolai Wallner is pleased to present *Balancing Acts*, a solo exhibition of new works by Jakob Kolding. For *Balancing Acts*, Jakob Kolding has created a large-scale installation composed of individual sculptures that together create a playful but precarious atmosphere, as if the exhibition itself is trying to keep a hold of its own balance.

In the tradition of 19th century dioramas and amusement parks as well as modernist theatre set design, the works create a scenography that represent a vivid world, producing a stage that can literally be entered. In the same vein, the immersive quality of this world shows itself to be deceitful, as once the spectator moves within the installation the sculptures expose themselves to be one-dimensional. Made from wood cut-outs, the sculptures' fronts are adorned with black and white imagery while the backs are left untouched, apart from the basic supports that hold them. Some of the imagery is created through various collage elements, while with other works the simple gesture of a change in size, context or direction is the only intervention. The use of scale and position contributes to a sense of uneasiness, as it alters our preconceived notions of space. Intervening on the sculptures by changing or adding certain elements forces the spectator to bridge the gap between the way that the image is habitually presented, and the way that the image is experienced in this space.

The title of the exhibition can be understood as a reference to classic acrobatics where balancing is a bodily performance, as well as in a psychological sense as with the balancing of one's self in society between different identities, social hierarchies and positions of authority. Within the exhibition, the individual sculptures struggle for balance both within themselves, within the concrete context of the exhibition space and within the context of the other works.

Historical symbols from art and politics—such as the bird of prey—are worked into the imagery, but the symbolism is blurred and it is unclear if they are empowering in the classical sense or if they are rather having an unsettling effect. Contemporary symbols of authority such as a suit and tie or a football referee are equally examined and opened up by minimal means. There's a certain tension present but also, crucially, a humorous approach—something that can be seen in the figure of the woman standing with a hood of uncertain significance over her head. Similarly, the presence of a tiger lurking in the background plays with the idea of real threat, but equally with more fantastical elements such as fictional stories and fables. In two panels, depicting illustrations from the classic adventure literature of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* and Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, more images of fantasy and imagination occur, such as a raft at sea. In the light of recent real life events and politics these illustrations present at the same time a state of ambiguity and uncertainty. The imagery literally teeters—or rather balances—on the brink of danger and excitement.

Combined, the sculptures present a variety of theatrical gestures in a permanent state of imbalance—a series of fragile positions that, despite the markedly one-dimensional character of the works, refuses any one-sided way of viewing. The result is a prevalent sense of ambivalence that runs throughout the exhibition, simultaneously expressing the fear of falling and the joy and playfulness in losing, and finding, your balance.

Jakob Kolding (b.1971, Denmark) lives and works in Berlin, Germany. He attended The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (Copenhagen). Kolding has exhibited widely at many prestigious museums and institutions across Europe and North America, including Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (Amsterdam), The Frankfurter Kunstverein (Frankfurt), Kunstverein (Hamburg), CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts (San Francisco), The Museum of Contemporary Art (San Diego), and The University of Michigan Museum of Art (Ann Arbor). His work is being currently exhibited at a group show at MoMa (New York) and a group show at Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart (Stuttgart).