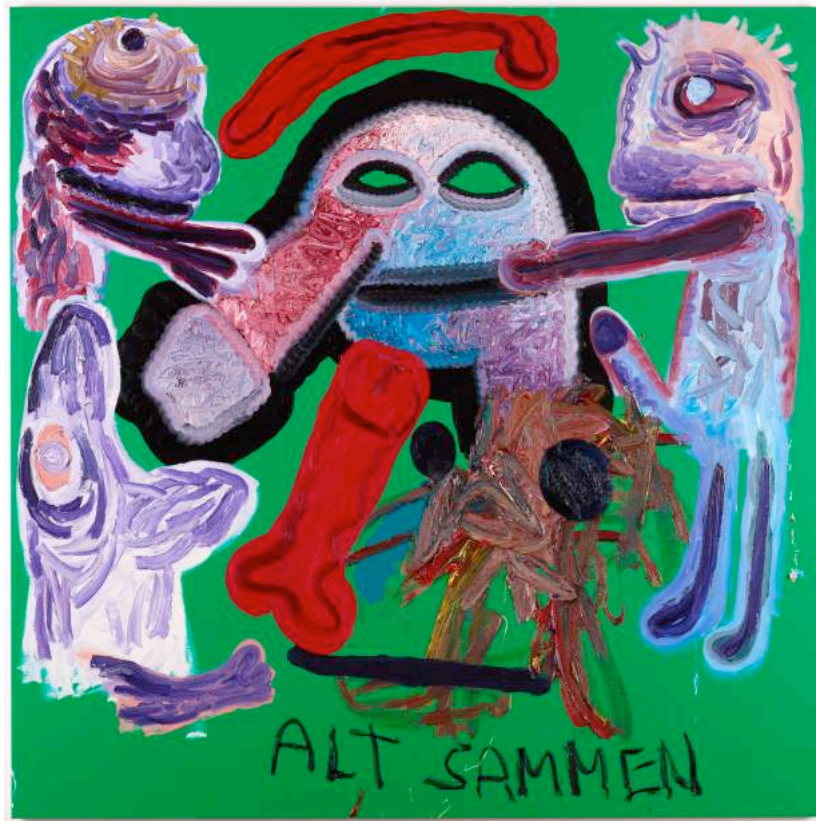


GALERIE THADDAEUS ROPAC

LONDON PARIS SALZBURG



Bjarne Melgaard, *Untitled*, 2018

Oil on canvas, 180 x 180 cm (70.87 x 70.87 in.)

Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac London · Paris · Salzburg. © Bjarne Melgaard/ DACS, London, 2018

BJARNE MELGAARD

An exhibition in two parts

BODYPARTY (SUBSTANCE PAINTINGS)

and

LIFE KILLED MY CHIHUAHUA

23 FEBRUARY – 31 MARCH 2018

Opening

In the presence of the artist

Thursday 22 February 2018, 6 - 8pm

37 Dover Street, W1S 4NJ London

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PRESS RELEASE

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London, is pleased to present an exhibition in two parts, by Bjarne Melgaard. The physical gallery exhibition, *Bodyparty (Substance Paintings)* will be displayed in tandem with a pioneering virtual extension, *Life Killed My Chihuahua*.

Bodyparty (Substance Paintings) is an installation of 14 new paintings in the London gallery's Ely Room. This intimate, introspective body of work, straight from the artist's Oslo studio, reflects on his complex relationship with past and present. The series, shown here for the first time, began when the artist returned to Norway from the US in summer 2017. The works were revisited and completed in the winter of 2017 with a second layer that challenges the first. This incorporation of a change in stylistic approach embodies both the effects of passing time and the duality present in the title. 'Bodyparty', is what Melgaard sees as a 'sexy' allusion to the body and its physicality, while 'Substance Paintings' is his 'dorky' analysis of the making of the works themselves. The phrase 'substance paintings' is written on a number of the pieces and refers to the different effects of the conscious and unconscious mind on the painting process and its resulting timeframe.

Life Killed My Chihuahua is a digital concept by Julia Peyton-Jones, Senior Global Director: Special Projects at Ropac, and curated by Melgaard himself and publisher Elise By Olsen. It grants a unique insight into Melgaard's artistic practice and the loneliness of being an artist; chronicling Oslo's contemporary counterculture. Prominent creatives from the city's thriving underground scene are showcased, including Admir Batlak, Victoria Duffee, Haikw/, Matias Kiil, Pasenau, Charlie Roberts, Silicone Works, Anne Karine Thorbjørnsen, Morteza Vaseghi and Bror August Vestbø, with content ranging from sculpture, video and painting, to textile, design, photography and graphics. Running in parallel with the exhibition in the gallery, *Life Killed My Chihuahua* will unfold on the gallery's Instagram (@thaddaeusropac). It actively involves the audience by creating a holistic relationship between the physical and digital, spatially-limited and virtual, introversion in *Bodyparty (Substance Paintings)* and the extraversion in *Life Killed My Chihuahua*. Both parts of the exhibition are characteristic of Melgaard's singular style: independent, radical and non-conformist.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Bjarne Melgaard lives and works in Oslo and was born in 1967 in Sydney, Australia. He began his career in the mid-1990s with neo-expressionistic, frantic paintings and installations. His art deals with the dark side of humanity: self-destruction, deviant sexuality and unusual religious beliefs. It provides an insight into subcultures and parallel worlds, often discussing and pushing the boundaries of societal acceptance. Digital platforms are integral to the artist's creative process: *W Magazine* nominated Melgaard one of the three artists providing the most 'Instagrammable' art of 2017, 'Bjarne Melgaard knew exactly how to melt the internet's heart'.

Melgaard has a strong history of working in collaboration with other artists and renowned craftsmen (from hairdressers, furniture- and fashion-designers to make-up artists). His exhibitions pay tribute to those who have influenced and inspired him, including film director Catherine Breillat and actress Shelley Duval. *The Casual Pleasure of Disappointment* (Red Bull Arts, 2017), for which he created a multilevel, psycho-pathological department store, violently embraced the obsessive and self-destructive aspects of fashion and consumerism: he gave away his personal collection of designer fashion and streetwear (worth over half a million dollars) to the public free of charge on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Melgaard has had more than 45 solo exhibitions in leading galleries around the world. His work has been seen in numerous group shows and at international art fairs. He is a frequent curator, has written more than a dozen novels, and produced seven films. His latest book, *A New Novel* (2012), was the first English-language novel to be published by Norwegian publishing giant Aschehoug.

Melgaard's work is owned by leading museums and art collections. In 2011, he represented Norway at the 54th Venice Biennale, and was given a mid-career retrospective at the Astrup Fearnley Museum in Oslo. He has twice participated in the Biennale de Lyon. In 2014, he took part in the Whitney Biennial and in January 2015 he was the focus of the first of six important exhibitions at the Munch Museum in Oslo: *MELGAARD + MUNCH The end of it all has already happened* placed his works in direct dialogue with Edvard Munch's oeuvre. In late 2016, Skira Rizzoli published the first comprehensive monograph on the artist. In November 2017, Melgaard presented a collaborative jewellery collection with jeweller Bjørg Nordli-Mathisen (BJØRG) at the Astrup Fearnley Museum.

Melgaard's projects for 2018 include a 'Muppet-show' exhibition (produced at the Jim Henson Muppet studio curated by Jenny Schlenzka) at the Performance Space 122 (PS 122), New York, and a project at the Belgrade Biennale in September, curated by

Gunnar Kvaran, Director of Astrup Fearley Museum. In May, Bjarne will participate in the group show *Wahlverwandtschaften – Ceci n'est pas un Portrait*, curated by Hubert Klocker and Denise Wendel-Poray, at the Friedrichshof Collection in Austria. The artist is currently working with leading architects Snøhetta to build 'A House to Die In', first unveiled in Melgaard's 2012 exhibition at the ICA. The project is facing increasing criticism due to its location, a forest near Oslo in which Edvard Munch had his studio. Though his project is controversial as ever, Melgaard sees it as constructive, adding to the neighbourhood and ultimately increasing the importance of Ekely as an artistic community.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Elise By Olsen is a publisher based in Oslo, Norway. She was, aged 13, internationally recognized as "the world's youngest editor-in-chief", of youth culture magazine *Recens Paper*. As she turned 18 Elise resigned from her position as editor of *Recens* to make space for a new generation of creative youth, and to contribute to a looping creative scene. She also works as a brand consultant, exhibition curator, fashion critic and university lecturer. Elise currently holds the position as editor-in-chief of *Wallet*.

Admir Batlak is a fashion designer who puts special emphasis on textile development and innovative construction. Referencing fashion history, social movements and youth culture, his collections explore classic feminine codes and comment on their relevance in a contemporary context. Through collaborations with other art fields, he seeks to challenge the show format and elevate the perception of fashion design. He has shown at Galleri Riis, The Munch Museum, Kunstnernes Hus, Kunstnerforbundet and 1857 Oslo. In 2017 he received the Costume Award for best Norwegian designer.

Veronica Bruce and Karoline Bakken Lund make sculptures, paintings and performances.

Victoria Duffee is an artist and critic from NYC and is currently an MFA candidate at the Oslo National Academy Of Art, with an emphasis on textile. Taking as a starting point her close everyday relationship to digital imagery and her fantasy-based relationship to nature, glamour and fashion, she works in a diverse range of media including video, digital weaving and metal. She has exhibited in New York, Los Angeles, Amsterdam and Oslo. In 2016 she and writer Andreas Breivik established the art criticism magazine *Vi Ser Pa Kunst*.

HAiKw/ is a collaborative platform for fashion. The name of the clothing label reflects the group's working method: the Norwegian word *haik* means hitchhike. They invite

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an ever-changing cast of people to join the making of their clothing collections. They have held artists residencies at Rogaland Center for Contemporary Art and Bergen Kunsthall Upstairs, made fashion shows in collaboration with Performance Art Platform Trollkrem at Kunstneres Hus in Oslo and Bergen Kunsthall, exhibited at Rod Bianco Gallery and Format Gallery, as well as at Wiels Museum in Brussels. HAIKw/ is run by Harald Lunde Helgesen and Ida Falck Øien.

Matias Kiil is a BFA Student at The Academy of Fine Arts, Oslo. His broad practice takes text as its focus, which then resolves itself through sculpture, performance and image-making. He has published texts in *AGATHA* magazine and *Recens Paper*, and was recently featured in the group exhibition *Transitions: Transatlantic Treatments* at Rod Bianco Gallery in Oslo.

Maria Pasenau was educated at the Norwegian School of Photography. She works as the photo editor for Norwegian newspaper *Natt & Dag* and is the former in-house photographer for *Recens Paper*. She has participated in exhibitions in Oslo, Bergen and Paris, and is currently showing in *Faithless Pictures* at the National Gallery, Oslo.

Charlie Roberts lives and works in Oslo, New York and Los Angeles. A cultural magpie, his various endeavours cross-pollinate, borrowing from art-historical and pop-cultural sources. His paintings display the perspectival complexity of ancient Egyptian and Byzantine painting, bringing to mind Hockney's early works, Cubism and comic books. His subject matter, utterly contemporary, banal and everyday is at odds with the delicacy of the medium in which he works: watercolour on paper.

Anne Karine Thorbjørnsen launched her eponymous fashion practice after graduating from Central Saint Martins MA, London, in 2012. Central to her work is drapery and the fold. She has exhibited in London, Paris, Melbourne, Stockholm and Oslo.

Morteza Vaseghi is a multi-disciplinary graphic designer and art director with an interest in video. Born in Tehran, he studied graphic design and illustration at the University of the Arts, London College of Communication, and has worked extensively in London, Tehran and Oslo since 2005, both independently and with clients ranging from individuals to institutions, creating distinctive concept-based results.

Bror August Vestbø is a Norwegian fashion designer and founder of the eponymous label, Bror August. Vestbø's work centres around breaking down established ideas of what a fashion brand should be, instead presenting emotion-filled garments that seek to create direct connections with their audience. Vestbø's garments develop organically, leaving traces of unexpected outcomes, failure and success.

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OPENING HOURS
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