

KÖNIG LONDON

NORBERT BISKY | ANOMIE

KÖNIG LONDON

7 APRIL - 19 MAY 2018

OPENING: 6 APRIL, 6 - 9 PM

KÖNIG LONDON is pleased to present *Anomie*, Norbert Bisky's first solo show in the UK. On view are new paintings on canvas and paper, complemented by a room installation designed specially for the exhibition.

In sociology, the term 'anomie' describes a societal state marked by a lack of norms and values - formerly religious - and the consequent disintegration of social structures and relations. It further denotes the discrepancy between culturally shared ideals and the socially determined means to achieve them, resulting in feelings of alienation and depression. Norbert Bisky uses the term as a title and thus as a conceptual starting point for his new works.

The examination of the complex dynamics of power between socio-political systems and the individual is a recurring theme in Bisky's current work. This can already be seen in the artist's transformation of the exhibition space: the red walls convey the impression of a tunnel, leading us to flight.

The paintings themselves are small-to-medium-scale, displaying a wide array of different motifs. We see collapsing architecture, people aimlessly drifting through the image space, fragmented faces and mangled bodies, insurgents and lynchings. The dynamic compositions exhibit a complex nexus of connotations and references drawing from current socio-political events. Snapshots of our unraveling world.

The work 'Anomie' - designed as a collage and sharing a title with the exhibition - shows parts of a human body in front of a pastel-blue sky. This background nearly encompasses the entire image space, but gives way, at parts, to reveal fragments of a second body underneath the blue. The technique Bisky deploys here, collaging painted fragments of canvas onto the image background, can be read as an allusion to repressive systems of power, in which information is purposefully held back or revealed. The juxtaposition of apocalyptic motifs and harmless colour palette is fundamental to Bisky's imagery and once again alludes to the thin line between utopian ideas and dystopian social conditions. Revealingly, the portrait of Marinus van der Lubbe, a Dutch anarchist who was sentenced to death for his involvement in the Reichstag fire, appears twice. Not only did the young man's activism - driven by a utopian vision and geared towards a social paradigm shift - prove to be unsuccessful, the event ultimately helped the Nazis consolidate their power and restrict democratic principles in the process: utopian ideals turned dystopian reality in an instant.

The sexual orientation of the activist played no apparent role in his conviction, yet for Bisky it is another reference point for the critical examination of political systems that consolidate power via control and suppression of freedom and individuality. After all, how inclusive a society is towards members of the LGBTQI+ community is still highly indicative of the degree to which humanist

KÖNIG LONDON
259-269 OLD MARYLEBONE ROAD
LONDON NW1 5RA

T +44. 207. 258 3883
LONDON@KOENIGLONDON.CO.UK
KOENIGLONDON.CO.UK

OPENING HOURS
WED-SAT 11AM - 6PM
OR BY APPOINTMENT

KÖNIG LONDON

values are accepted in a society and to which members of this society are able to live autonomous lives. Bisky translates these deliberations into explicit depictions of queerness, such as in the work 'kiss,' depicting a scene in which three men engage in a shared kiss. The engagement with queerness and heteronormativity further shows in several of the oil on paper works: spread out in front of an abstract, pastel-coloured background, groups of nudes, male figures bathe and playfully wrestle each other. Titles such as 'Conversion Therapy' - a branch of the sexual reorientation business that is currently booming in the US - further gesture towards the complex psychological mechanisms of oppression that are still firmly established in our culture. Our notion of an equal and fair society is thus revealed to be nothing more than a utopian illusion.

Norbert Bisky, born 1970 in Leipzig, is regarded as one of the most influential artists of his generation. His works have been on display in numerous international shows, including exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Bern (Switzerland), at Haus am Waldsee (Berlin, Germany), in the Latvian National Museum of Art (Riga, Latvia), at Kunsthalle Rostock (Germany), at Haus am Lützowplatz (Berlin, Germany), at Martin-Gropius-Bau (Berlin, Germany), in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (Israel), at Maison Rouge (Paris, France) and at the Beijing Biennial (China). His works are represented in the following public collections (selection): Museum of Modern Art (New York, USA), Museum Ludwig (Cologne, Germany), National Museum of Contemporary Art (Seoul, South Korea), Kunsthalle Rostock (Germany), Museum der Bildenden Künste (Leipzig, Germany), Sammlung Deutsche Bank (Frankfurt, Germany), Palm Springs Art Museum (Palm Springs, USA), Le FNAC Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (France).

The exhibition opening on 6 April will feature a concert by musician Sam Vance-Law.

Text: Anna Redeker