



Olympus

Opening Soon until 7 March 2021

Matthias Lars Anders, Matthias Danberg, Kirill Ivlev, Peter Karpinski, Jörg Michael Kratz, Henrik Löpmeier, Eva Sofie Lonken, Fallon-Delphine Marschhäußler, Isabel Schober, Michelle Tophinke, Yasin Garrit Wörheide, Marvin Wunderlich

The exhibition “Olympus” presents works by twelve former and current students of Prof. Michael van Ofen’s painting class at the Academy of Art in Münster. The selected works span sixteen years and encompass a wide range of different artistic techniques and media. The consistently new interpretation of painting is permanently present – sometimes classically depicted in oil on canvas, in felt pen or biro on paper, on ceramics, scarves, or printed in 3D.

This exhibition evidences an intuitively self-confident enthusiasm to experiment with painterly elements, often expanding the imaginary pictorial space and challenging the viewer to engage in conversation with the art on display.

On the ascent to the highest artistic “Olympus”, these young artists explore questions about the genesis, impact and meaning of art and the chasms it creates: Into the lower spheres of the human psyche and life on the one side and into the higher, nearly mythical ones on the other.

The path of art may be a narrow one between the abyss and endless renown but the artists in this exhibition continue to pursue it persistently.

Matthias Lars Anders (*1985) creates works which engage with the creation of images, their effect and reality. He uses collage techniques to examine contemporary issues of painting: materials, work processes and different media are layered over one another or juxtaposed in order to be withdrawn from their original context. The delicate compositions of the series “Black Marigolds” with the individual components’ unique colour palette and flowing movement are reminiscent of the Japanese art genre Ukiyo-e. They evoke associations with motives like flowers, fire, smoke and sunsets, which, despite their apparent melodic triviality, develop expansive dimensions of meaning in Anders’ collages.

For **Matthias Danberg** (*1981), virtualisation and the associated upheaval and transformation are at the source of his artistic work. In this sense, his video works can be understood as a digital continuation of verbally transmitted stories, fairy tales or myths, which are made tangible and experiential through the materiality of his sculptures. At the same time, they are direct translations of the virtual world, as they transcribe digital data into acrylic using 3D printing techniques. In this way, references to art history’s imagery develop a trans- or post-humanist narrative which scrutinises human knowledge and perception for their authenticity and truth within an omnipresent and inescapable virtual world. In the video work “bee chapter three”, which makes direct reference to Joseph Beuys’ “Honey Pump at Work”, the seemingly martial emergence of queen bees is visualized in a sensual way. In its circulatory structure, it explores thematic issues such as individuality and community, work and ecology.

Despite the versatility of his artistic work, which ranges from sculpture in a classical sense to large-scale installations, the artist **Kirill Ivlev** (*1978) says: “At heart, I am a painter”. In a cross-section of

the past 16 years, he is showing pictures from the series “Palimpsest”, whose title suggests the very essence of the pieces: Already existing paintings, acquired, for instance, in antique shops or at flea markets, are repainted according to a strict concept. Conversing with the respective piece, Ivlev decides which elements should be highlighted and which should be discarded: “If the painting is missing something, I will add it, if something is too much, I will take it away.” This is sometimes done in a destructive approach to the painting’s substance or its actual state, for example by rubbing, scraping or rinsing off the surface layers, but similarly, the work may receive sensitive restorative attention. In occasionally ironic additions, the artist is concerned with the versatile shift in the original values of the painting.

Peter Karpinki’s (*1985) work unfolds at the interface of film, drawing and painting: his film posters date back to his time as tutor at StudioDigitaleKunst in Münster, where he used to provide hand-drawn posters for weekly film screenings – although a large part of these have since been lost, some are on view in “Olympus”. The posters are complemented by A4-format drawings in pencil and ball-point pen, which are closely related to the posters in terms of their cinematic theme and analogue production process. Some of them were created while watching a film in the days before the exhibition opening; the artist describes the drawings as “the most honest and simple form of thinking”. While some scenes can be identified easily by film lovers, others defy immediate recognition. In addition to the cinematic objects they all reflect the general human psyche and the concrete process of contemplation of (cinematic) image and content.

Jörg Michael Kratz (*1987), born and working in Haan, describes the nucleus of his work as “the continuous reflection on the perception of pictorial spatiality from the perspective of painting”. He uses partially imaginary pictorial spaces and the play of light, shadow and texture as a framework for critically questioning and depicting fundamental issues of painting and perception. The subject of his mostly small-format oil paintings is often a dark interior, sparsely lit by a window or a dim light source. His visual language and the way he directs the viewer’s gaze from picture to picture is reminiscent of, amongst others, Aki Kaurismäki’s cinematographic vocabulary. Recent works further deal with fictitious forest landscapes, suggesting a moment of disorientation and a resemblance to monumental cathedral architecture. Graphics and murals form an additional aspect of his work.

That which the viewer encounters in **Henrik Löpmeier’s** (*1986) “random image comparer” is always unique: images retrieved from the inexhaustible pool of the Internet are juxtaposed by a random generator in a moment of apparent unpredictability and, beyond that, given “arbitrary” titles which reference what is shown on a semantic, visual or metaphorical level, thus repeatedly transcending their original meaning. The algorithm behind this ensures that no two people will ever see the same thing twice. Through this unique nature and lack of reproducibility, the digital work may even find its way back to Walter Benjamin’s auratic artwork¹ – until the presumed coincidence is repeated at some point? The principle of chance, which has fascinated people since ancient times, also determines the 3D prints, which are at least in part owed to intentionally allowed impurities in the coding. They do not hide the fact that they are experimental and thus break with conventional expectations placed on museum exhibits.

¹ Walter Benjamin, 1935, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”.

In her oil paintings, **Eva Sofie Lonken** (*1995) navigates two seemingly contrasting spheres of space and time. On the one hand, she is occupied with Baroque visual symbolism: In front of a poisonous-green landscape populated with fish, frogs and birds, a re-interpreted allegory of painting could be a self-portrait of the artist, while Bathsheba, who in art historical tradition is often depicted together with her husband, the voyeuristic King David, appears accompanied by women in Lonken's interpretation. On the other hand, the painter's frequent study trips to Japan influence her artistic language: Japanese lettering, street or bar scenes from Tokyo repeatedly find their way onto the canvas. Like Wolfgang Koeppen's "Pigeons in the Grass", eponymous birds and other animals or people wander, as if by chance, through an abstract and dark, only sparsely illuminated world, thus probing the purpose of human existence.

Fallon-Delphine Marschhäuser (*1984) is showing some of her earlier works: Although Marschhäuser traces her artistic origins back to conventional painting on canvas, she increasingly detached herself from this during a transitional phase in which she started to reproduce colour and form more organically in the medium of ceramics. This departure from the canvas medium allows for an in-depth study of the individual elements' psychological effects. Particularly still lifes depicting flower bouquets and dating from the 16th to 18th century serve as her inspiration. The artist is less interested in the actual epoch, but rather in the effect of the pictures and their different aspects on the viewer. A further point of fascination of ceramics is that they enforce a deprivation of control: In moments of unpredictability and coincidence, the glaze on the fired clay changes once again in the kiln, so that its effect is always somewhat beyond artistic control.

In her small ceramics, paintings and drawings, **Isabel Schober** (*1992) focuses primarily on gender and identity-related issues, the human condition and the relationship between the body and imagination. In her research, the artist as "flâneuse" explores the abnormal and absurd both in her immediate surroundings and on the Internet: Small sculptures occupy the narrow entrance area of KIT: small boxers, soap bars and face masks, but also burning cars or a flower vase boldly emblazoned with the word "pussy" radiate a materiality in which a direct, authentic creative process shines through. Her works do not seem to be refined and honed in a lengthy process but emerge spontaneously and seemingly without effort. Each individual object and its symbolism can be correlated to others, generating ever new, slightly ironic narratives.

Similarly, sarcasm is a concise stylistic device in **Michelle Tophinke's** (*1997) works: Both with digital and analogue methods, mundane situations are amplified using linguistic techniques snatched from her direct environment, thus endowing them with an entirely new or ambiguous meaning. Felt-tip pen and fineliner accentuate the supposed childlike naivety simulated in her work. The book as a medium allows the artist to combine multifaceted works and is purposely designed to be touched, browsed through and used. Casually devised drawing and expressive colours create an approachable reflection of everyday experiences, feelings or conversations, which never lack a subtly raw punchline. Support and strength, however, are represented by her patron saints, who are meant to exude positive energy against negativity of any kind on paper or as a blanket.

A religious symbolism is often inherent in the sculptures and paintings of visual artist and musician **Yasin Garrit Wörheide** (*1990). Especially in their subject matter and choice of name, they bear parallels to mythologies and ritual objects of the American indigenous peoples. Wörheide was able to further pursue this artistic interest within the context of a stipend to travel to the Ukayali in Peru.

“Mindmap – Dissolution of the Ego” was created in the run-up to this excursion as a kind of assessment of the artist’s expectations and perception of reality. It mirrors the role of painting in Wörheide’s work – not as an end in itself, but rather as a very personal part of the sculptural development process. The ceramic corn ears are part of a series which deals with corn as a globally distributed and partly genetically modified food, but also as a cultural object. Freely interpreted, they tower over the viewer in a pyramid-shape; only at second glance are the partly distorted faces recognised in the individual kernels – a reference to the Maya civilisations’ story of creation, in which The Gods formed humans from corn flour. This botanical-humanoid opponent encourages us to hold up a mirror to our own conception of body and spirit.

On **Marvin Wunderlich**’s (*1990) canvases, candy-coloured little houses, reduced to minimalist architecture, gleam in glowing landscapes – sometimes with a strange shadowlessness, sometimes demarcated by straight and smoothly articulated shadow planes. In castles, palaces and streets depicted with an almost childlike form language, these small houses with their strangely invisible interiors flock around each other, huddle closely together or mark off borders – from each other, from the viewer or from an unknown “Other”? Contrasting with the huts’ almost human expression, clear geometric forms and undimmed radiant colours produce an expressive, self-confident appearance of minimalist painting, which interrogates its very constitution.

Concept and realisation: Michael van Ofen