

MYTH WAGNER

LA VIE EN ROSEROCK

THORSTEN BRINKMANN

The Hamburg artist Thorsten Brinkmann deals in a playful-ironic distance with the Nordic mythical figures from Wagner's cosmos of figures. For the design of the mythical figures, which he has created especially for this exhibition, Brinkmann draws on a constantly growing collection of found objects. They include all kinds of discarded second-hand articles, remnants of bourgeois domestic culture, and bulky refuse, and are collaged and photographed by Brinkmann in the context of performative self-dramatizations. In the process, his self-portraits as Brünhilde, Siegfried, Farsolt, or Alberich the Dwarf counteract the art-historical genre of the self-portrait. Although he dresses the body approximately according to the historical origins of the figure's historical origins and plays with the collective pictorial memory by using compositions of the 16th and 17th centuries, he also uses familiar images of modern media culture. But the significant feature of the portrait, the face, is absent and is replaced by things like battered buckets, bags, or pieces of cloth. The replacement of the physiognomy by objects turns the face into a mask, which on the one hand seems alienating and threatening, but also bizarre and absurd on the other. Thus the masking of Wagner's characters, who in his music dramas are wild, full of magical powers, and superhumanly strong, on the one hand underlines the strangeness and menace of their nature; On the other hand, their surreal and Dadaesque disguise lends to the magic of their mythical aura - a pleasantly humorous lightness, which takes away the weight of Wagner's mythical world. Thus the hero Siegfried in *Siggi di Star* wears a black leather jacket with an adaptation of the Superman logo, a long green skirt and parts of an armor - a helmet and an arm cuff made of crumpled aluminum - and in this combination of discarded clothes, bulky and modern pop culture, he looks like a character from the modern heroic epic *Star Wars*. Siegfried mutates into Darth Vader, who is the black knight, representing the archetype of the cruel warrior from fairy tales and heroic sagas. With his green skirt, the helmet and the crocheted lace doily on his left shoulder, he displays feminine features which satirizes the myth of the virile hero with superhuman powers; the dwarf Alberich appears in *L' Alberling Quell* like a too short version of the black knight from *The Knights of the Coconut* (original title *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, in German "*Monty Python and the the Holy Grail*"), a 1975 feature film by the British comedy group Monty Python, which satirically treats the saga of King Arthur and the search for the Holy Grail. And just as little as the Black Knight with his severed arms and legs, one does not take the child-size, swollen potato-like dwarf king of the Nibelungen to be from great magic power, emanating from his camouflage helmet. The helmet is in fact a dented can, which, in addition to the bouncy sack-like robe and the broken broomstick (of his lance), contributes above all to the fact that Alberich looks like a heartwarming child's Surprise Good Humor Dwarf.

The humor and biting irony that Brinkmann brings to Wagner's characters are also expressed in the titles of his works. The trivializations or puns of the original names - Siegfried becomes *Siggi di Star*, Alberich *L' Alberling Quell* - turn the mythical reference figures into protagonists of modern comedy shows and invite the viewer to a very contemporary reception of Wagner's cosmos of figures. The legendary figures without reverence and shyness before their oversized cultural greatness are at once at eye level and with the winking smile of a user, are accustomed to the media and can thus also overcome the inhibitions of many culturally interested people towards Wagner's work as the epitome of classical seriousness.

Dr. Margit im Schlaa, in: Kat. Exhibit. Myth Wagner. La Vie an Roserock. Thorsten Brinkmann, Villa Klinger, Leipzig, April 21 - July 7, 2013.