

Universalmuseum Joanneum Press

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Ridiculously Yours! Art, Awkwardness and Enthusiasm

An exhibition of Neue Galerie Graz and HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark in Cooperation with [Bundeskunsthalle Bonn](#) and [Deichtorhallen Hamburg/Sammlung Falckenberg](#).

Initiated and conceived by Cristina Ricupero und Jörg Heiser

The exhibition will be held in two locations:

[Halle für Kunst Steiermark](#), Burgring 2, 8010 Graz

[Neue Galerie Graz](#), Joanneumsviertel, 8010 Graz

Opening: 12.10.2023

6 pm HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark (welcome and opening speeches)

From 7 pm Neue Galerie Graz (exhibition tour and reception in the Rotunda)

Duration: 13.10.2023–25.02.2024

About the exhibition

The feeling or attitude of enthusiastic embarrassment is undoubtedly associated with a notion of humorous light-heartedness – but just as much with a sense of earnest persistence, against all odds. It is certainly associated with irony – but also with a deeply unironic, rather enthusiastic belief in the necessity and possibility of persevering and continuing with something that has been recognized as unpleasant or embarrassing.

One of the most important attitudes or feelings underlying modern and contemporary art is an enthusiastic silliness that does not shy away from the embarrassing, the unreasonably silly. The exhibition, which spans epochs, includes works by around 100 artists from all over the world and spans an arc from earlier centuries of artistic creation to the immediate past.

In modernism since the 19th century in general and the classical avant-gardes of the early 20th century in particular, a very specific dialectic is at work: on the one hand, bold innovations, radical negation, and aesthetic dogmas – but on the other hand, a certain kind of laughter that formed the basis for the creation of this exhibition project. It is a laughter that is fun and at the same time – without wanting to scandalize only – undermines all conservatism, bigotry, morality and not least avant-garde dogmatisms. By opposing the use of culture to intimidate, to secure unearned privileges, this laughter shows how authority loses its grip, how the pompous gesture and the image of the hero are invalidated.

Thematic sections feature works by numerous important artists – from Marcel Duchamp to Francis Picabia, René Magritte, Giorgio de Chirico to Sturtevant, Alfred Jarry, Sigmar Polke, Martin Kippenberger, Maria Lassnig and Robert Breer to contemporary positions such as Paul

McCarthy, Nicole Eisenman, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Isa Genzken, Pauline Curnier-Jardin, Kiluanji Kia Henda, Cosima von Bonin, Jakob Lena Knebl, Henrike Naumann, Ashley Hans Scheirl, Jeffrey Vallance as well as Ming Wong, just to name a few. In addition to numerous loans coming from European and American museums as well as private collections, also included are works from the Universalmuseum Joanneum collection in Graz, featuring, for example, pieces by Rembrandt van Rijn from the Alte Galerie or by Josef Danhauser, Jiri Kovanda and Martin Kippenberger from the Neue Galerie Graz.

The overall exhibition is presented in both institutions, Neue Galerie Graz and HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark featuring spectacular artworks in each venue. One will encounter, a surreal maze of mirrors by Dutch artist Gabriel Lester, an immersive installation specially commissioned for the exhibition which will take central stage at Neue Galerie Graz and be confronted with a monumental installation composed of sixteen freestanding painted cut-outs, constructed like theatre backdrops by American artist Jim Shaw presented in the central gallery of HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark. Besides dealing with its specific topic, this exhibition also offers an overview of important positions in international art history and contemporary art.

Ridiculously Yours! flirts with the humor of disaster, bad taste, the camp approach, B-movie culture, science fiction, horror, etc., as well as immaturity, idiocy, intuition and, of course, passion – not to mention enthusiasm.

Exhibition Chapters

Chapter I Coney Island

New York's Coney Island is where in 1903 Luna Park opened – it became the blueprint for many amusement parks, with their crystal palaces, haunted houses, and oversaturated, multicolored worlds. The scenographer Adrien Rovero has imagined a huge, candy-colored environment with oversized striped walls. Here, as in an amusement park, things might be too big or too small, creating a circus-like welcome for the show.

Chapter II Origins, Dada

Amusement parks have always had strange cabinets of curiosities. Of course, this is not to be understood literally here – for included are works by anything but merely 'curious' pioneers of irreverent humor, from Pieter Bruegel the Elder to Alfred Jarry to Elsa von Freytag-Lohringhoven, who, as a contemporary and companion of Marcel Duchamp, played a significant, if not decisive role in the invention of the readymade. But caricature and film also play a role in this chapter. Thus we can at least sketch the origins of enthusiastic awkwardness in art, which found its first climax in the collages, performances, and puns of the international DADA movement

Chapter III The Modern Museum

What we call 'modern museum' features works of Surrealism and other modern masterpieces, including some surprising mismatches. Here we find the classical, stuffy aesthetics of certain galleries found in modern museums, including ropes and pedestals, suggesting the intimidating solemnity of the serious master genius. Yet the works included – by the likes of Asger Jorn, Giorgio de Chirico, René Magritte, and James Ensor – precisely mocks this kind of solemnity. As a kind of link to the next chapter, there is a smaller sub-section where numerous works by the likes of Martin Kippenberger and Sturtevant upend and parody the logics of the production, display, and collection of art that not least formed 'The Modern Museum'.

Chapter IV Minimal Art/Conceptual Art

Minimal Art and Conceptual Art from the 1960s on established an austere, dry aesthetics, dominated by white, grey, and black hues. And this is precisely where its deadpan humor resides. One can describe this chapter as a very cool White Cube, with moving walls and shifting, small objects by Robert Rauschenberg and Sigmar Polke, with portraits of cows by Jef Geys, or the found Sunday paintings wrapped in wool by Lara Favaretto. Together, these works thus form an (almost) silent slapstick film.

Chapter V B-Movies

Welcome to the wacky, shady world of 'B-Movie' section. The eccentric American film director Ed Wood (1924–1978) has been a great inspiration for this exhibition project. In 1980, two years after Wood's death, his "Plan 9 from Outer Space" (1957) was described as the "worst film ever made." Since then Wood – who had been unknown to many, but notorious among film buffs – has repeatedly been described the "worst director of all time." Despite – or rather because of – that unflattering title, he subsequently became a cult figure, a status enshrined by Tim Burton's 1994 film *Ed Wood*. For *Ridiculously Yours!*, Wood effectively functioned as a kind of working tool, implying questions about good and bad taste, irony, slapstick, the 'camp' approach, trash culture, idiocy, the 'do-it-yourself' attitude, outsider art, and not least, enthusiastic awkwardness. In this spirit and inspired by Studio 28, the very first cinema in Paris totally dedicated to the avant-garde and which opened in 1928 with lamps designed by Jean Cocteau, this space with its dim lighting picks up the atmosphere of seedy bars and ciné-clubs where one could eventually watch, for example, excerpts from Ed Wood films.

Chapter VI Camp

The notion of enthusiastic awkwardness has a lot of overlap with, though is not identical to, notions of camp – the aesthetic sensibility celebrating cheesiness and 'bad taste', and which is closely associated with queer culture. As artist and writer Philip Core stated in his 1984 book *Camp: The Lie That Tells the Truth*: "There are only two things essential to camp: a secret within the personality which one ironically wishes to conceal and exploit, and a peculiar way of seeing

things, affected by spiritual isolation, but strong enough to impose itself on others through acts of creation." These acts of creation often involve enthusiasm and awkwardness, because they imply an ambiguity towards society and culture at large: ambiguity because a phenomenon – often a phenomenon that is ridiculed, belittled, or stigmatized by others, not least those in more privileged and supposedly cultured positions – is enthusiastically embraced and celebrated.

Chapter VII Post-Surrealism/Post-Internet

As we move closer to the present day, we encounter a reality that in recent years has often been described as being too strange for satire – from Donald Trump becoming US president, to Brexit, to atrocious dictators sitting behind excessively long tables. But thinking back to the days of Surrealism, originating in the wake of the traumas of World War I, we have obviously also encountered bizarre combinations of cruelty and ridiculousness in earlier eras. In any case, 'Post-Surrealism/Post-Internet', introduces us to a contemporary world in which social media craziness, weird glitches, and contemporary digital pastiche encircle the absurdities of contemporary politics and capitalism, playing out like a TikTok nightmare

Participating Artists

Saâdane Afif, Assume Vivid Astro Focus, Dan Attoe, Johannes Baargeld, Judith Bernstein, Jean-Luc Blanc, Anna & Bernhard Blume, Cosima von Bonin, Ulla von Brandenburg, Robert Breer, Pieter Bruegel d. Ä., Marcus Calvin, Nina Childress, Giorgio de Chirico, Yun Choi, René Clair, Pauline Curnier Jardin, Josef Danhauser, Jeremy Deller, Brice Dellsperger, Rosie Dowd-Smyth, George Grosz, Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys, Josef Dobner, Theo van Doesburg, Marcel Duchamp, Mimosa Echard, Nicole Eisenman, Max Ernst, Lara Favaretto, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Hans Finsler, Peter Fischli und David Weiss, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Isa Genzken, Jef Geys, Martin Gostner, Nicholas Grafia mit Mikołaj Sobczak, George Grosz, Goerg Anton Gump, Raoul Hausmann, Heinrich Hoerle mit Anton Räderscheidt, Ramin Haerizadeh und Rokni Haerizadeh mit Hesam Rahmanian, Hannah Höch, Marcel Janco, Alfred Jarry, Mike Kelley, Katja Kelm, Kiluanji Kia Henda, Martin Kippenberger, Jakob Lena Knebl, Jiří Kovanda, Peter Land, Maria Lassnig, Gabriel Lester, Erik van Lieshout, Marko Lulić, René Magritte, Fabian Marti, Paul McCarthy, Bjarne Melgaard, Nathaniel Mellors, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, John Miller, Shana Moulton, MRZYK et MORICEAU, Henrike Naumann, Francis Picabia, Wong Ping, Katrin Plavčák, Pierre la Police, Sigmar Polke, Rembrandt van Rijn, Rob Pruitt, Sun Ra, Hans Richter, Roe Rosen, Mika Rottenberg, Ashley Hans Scheirl, Andreas Schulze, Jim Shaw, Roman Signer, Cora Spassvogel, Kurt Schwitters, Erich Spießbach, Sturtevant, Jeffrey Vallance, Jean-Luc Verna, Olav Westphalen, Ming Wong.

Lenders of the exhibition (Museums and Galleries)

C L E A R I N G, Forest, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brüssel, Yseult Gay / GAPEX VOF, Brüssel, BPS22 Art Museum of the Hainaut Province, Charleroi, carlier | gebauer, Berlin, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin, Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin, Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin, Peres Projects, Berlin, Sprüth Magers, Berlin u. Köln, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Faksimile), Berlin, Deichtorhallen Hamburg / Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg, Weng Fine Art AG, Monheim, Galerie Art: Concept, Paris, GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL, Paris, Galerie Crèvecœur, Paris, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Paris, gb agency, Paris, Kamel Mennour Gallery, Paris, La Cinémathèque Française, Paris, Masathis, Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de la ville

de Paris, Paris, PRAZ-DELAVALLE, Paris, Air de Paris, Romainville, Les Abattoirs, Musée – Frac Occitanie Toulouse, Galerie Martina Simeti, Milano, Findart SaS, Torino, Galleria Franco Noero - Lara Favaretto, Torino, Museen der Stadt Linz, Linz, Filmmuseum Wien, Wien, Maria Lassnig Stiftung, Wien, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien, Magasin III Stockholm Konsthall, Stockholm, Karma International, Zürich, Kunsthaus Zürich, New Art Exchange, Nottingham, Amir Shariat, Wien, as well as numerous private lenders .