

TINA BRAEGGER: WER WAGT MIT MIR EIN TÄNZCHEN, DER WIRD SICH VERRENKEN

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With some justification, one can speak of painting as an exhausted medium, groaning under the weight of its own history, the much-invoked 'death of painting', and its return as a zombie. By means of a feint, Tina Braegger has succeeded in maneuvering herself out of this impasse without having to take the way back via mannerist retro-painting. Namely, since 2016 Braegger has been painting exclusively bears, more specifically those *Marching Bears* associated with the band *The Grateful Dead*. Since their first appearance in 1973 on the cover of the LP "History of the Grateful Dead, Volume One (Bear's Choice)," the bears have been further developed in countless versions by the band's fans, the so-called *Deadheads*. Through the painterly appropriation of this figure, which the band had already appropriated, questions of authorship and their own location in historical processes are already embedded in the conceptual blueprint of her work. Moreover, the peculiar bears, undefined in content, shift the heavy and intellectualized medium of painting on light-footed terrain, when the 'death of painting' is suddenly marked as grateful and expressed by means of bears daring a dance of death. In this way, the deliberate limitation of Braegger's scope of action presents itself as the complete opposite, for the restriction on the motif level corresponds to an expansion of the painterly means and techniques. The result is a casualness unusual for contemporary painting - so unusual that some people hastily dismiss Tina Braegger's separate path of painting as terse or ironic.

"Wer wagt mit mir ein Tänzchen, der wird sich verrenken," ("He who dares to dance with me will contort himself") Braegger's first institutional solo exhibition, mixes new paintings with selected older works in a dense, for some even confrontational hanging. This, however, gives special emphasis to the individual painting's embedding in its serial framework - after all, each of Braegger's paintings is, in a sense, a realization of the concept, ranging from minimal executions to complex painting excesses. It thus becomes apparent that the *Marching Bears* are not, or not only, an excuse to paint. At the same time, they mark the contradictory nature of the idea of wanting to paint something new in a medium that has the weight of its own long history hanging like a millstone around its neck. This awareness of history is also present in Braegger's paintings, only that she manages to make the heavy look light.

Tina Braegger (*1985) lives and works in Berlin. In addition to numerous participations in group exhibitions in Germany and abroad, she had solo exhibitions at WeissFalk, Basel/Zurich; Société, Berlin; Friends Indeed, San Francisco and Meredith Rosen Gallery, New York, as well as an exhibition with Sturtevant at De 11Lijnen, Oudenburg, Belgium.

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