

This first institutional solo exhibition in Germany of works by the painter Uwe Henneken (*1974), who has recently attracted attention due to his extraordinary pictorial language, is long overdue. Henneken belongs to a new generation of Berlin-based painters who tread new paths with their conceptual approaches. His paintings and sculptures are unconventional in their examination of different utopias, reflecting the artist's deep-seated interest in the philosophy of culture and tracing the history of culture in its cycles and caesuras: beginning and end, becoming and passing are recurring themes in his oeuvre. In glaring colors, his paintings tell stories of the wondrous travels of his protagonists and confront, indeed, even surprise the viewer time and again with a defamiliarized pictorial language of childhood. Henneken's Frontier People stumble and roam through apparently sweetish, naïve landscapes. Upon closer examination, however, they suddenly begin to change into something grotesque or frightening. Symbolically depicting progress, a world is thematized in which religion and intuition had to yield to science and rationalism.

According to the artist, "repoetization" is at the heart of his working process. His works are based on knowledge that has been handed down; they draw from the mythical and occidental repertoire of images and rely on our (unconscious) knowledge of these cultural codes fixed in our collective memory. In this respect, his apparently clownish protagonists are to be viewed as pioneers and messengers who span the "Imperium Schlemihlium" at the border between old traditions and something new looming on the horizon. The Winterpeople, glaring, brightly colored hybrid beings, symbolically embody fatalism, people's subjection to the powers that be. As a consequence, Henneken's most recent paintings lack figures; the painterly aspect has priority, the metaphysical presence of a higher power is ubiquitous. They ultimately symbolize every individual's search for meaning, yet also society's quest for knowledge and fulfillment.

The exhibition at the Kunstverein Braunschweig is being accompanied by a comprehensive bilingual catalogue published by the Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König. It includes texts by Hilke Wagner (foreword), Katrin Meder, Gabriele Sand, David Tibet, and Ethan Wagner.

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