

RIDICULOUSLY YOURS!
Art, Awkwardness and Enthusiasm
13.10.2023 – 25.2.2024
HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark
Burgring 2, 8010 Graz (AT)

An exhibition by HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark and
Neuen Galerie Graz in cooperation with Deichtorhallen
Hamburg/Collection Falckenberg and Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn

Initiated and conceived by Jörg Heiser and Cristina Ricupero

Press talk: 12.10.2023, 10:30 am, Meeting point, Welcome and Curators' tour at
Neuen Galerie Graz
11:00 am, Curators' tour at HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark

Opening: 12.10.2023
6:00 pm at HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Welcome and Opening speeches
From 7:00 pm at Neue Galerie Graz, Exhibition tour and Reception in the rotunda

Catalog available / Side program and Education: halle-fuer-kunst.at

Press contact: Helga Droschl, hd@halle-fuer-kunst.at, +43 664 3935718

Exhibition venue HALLE FÜR KUNST

with Assume Vivid Astro Focus, Johannes Baargeld, Hugo Ball, Judith Bernstein, Jean-Luc Blanc, Anna & Bernhard Blume, Pieter Bruegel d. Ä., Nina Childress, Vladimir Chlebnikov, Yun Choi, Pauline Curnier Jardin, Jeremy Deller, Theo van Doesburg, Rosie Dowd-Smyth, Mimosa Echard, Nicole Eisenman, Max Ernst, Hans Finsler, Peter Fischli and David Weiss, Isa Genzken, Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys, Georg Anton Gump, Ramin Haerizadeh and Rokni Haerizadeh with Hesam Rahmanian, Raoul Hausmann, Heinrich Hoerle with Anton Räderscheidt, Marcel Janco, Alfred Jarry, Mike Kelley, Katia Kelm, Martin Kippenberger, Jakob Lena Knebl, Jiří Kovanda, Marko Lulić, Calvin Marcus, Fabian Marti, Paul McCarthy, John Miller, Shana Moulten, MRZYK et MORICEAU, Henrike Naumann, Wong Ping, Pierre la Police, Rob Pruitt, Hans Richter, Roe Rosen, Mika Rottenberg, Ashley Hans Scheirl, Jim Shaw, Roman Signer, Cora Spassvogel, Erich Spießbach

Exhibition venue Neue Galerie Graz

with Saādane Afif, Jack Arnold, Dan Attoe, Cosima von Bonin, Ulla von Brandenburg, Robert Breer, Giorgio de Chirico, René Clair, Josef Danhauser, Brice Dellsperger, Josef Dobner, Marcel Duchamp, Lara Favaretto, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Hans Finsler, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Jef Geys, Jacob de Gheyn, Martin Gostner, Nicholas Grafia with Mikołaj Sobczak, George Grosz, Kiluanji Kia Henda, Hannah Höch, Peter Land, Maria Lassnig, Gabriel Lester, Erik van Lieshout, René Magritte, Bjarne Melgaard, Nathaniel Mellors, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, Francis Picabia, Katrin Plavčák, Rembrandt van Rijn, Sun Ra, Andreas Schulze, Kurt Schwitters, Sturtevant, Jeffrey Vallance, Jean-Luc Verna, Olav Westphalen, Ming Wong

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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 *Ridiculously Yours!*, 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 and Jiří Kovanda.

The overall exhibition is presented in both institutions, HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark and Neue Galerie Graz 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.

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

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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 VI – *Minimal Art/Conceptual Art*

Minimal 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. Since it is conceived as an austere, dry exhibition space dominated by white, grey, and black, it will inevitably stand in contrast to the rest of the exhibition. Echoing the style of a silent slapstick film, one can describe it as a very cool white cube with moving walls and shifting small objects by Robert Breer (Neue Galerie) and a play with scale by Peter Fischli and David Weiss or Jiří Kovanda (HALLE FÜR KUNST) and other surprises.

Chapter V – *B-Movies*

Welcome to the wacky, shady world of *B-Movie* section. The eccentric American film director Ed Wood (1924–78) 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.

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Chapter VII – *Post-Surrealismus/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-Surrealismus/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.

Lenders of the exhibition

Deichtorhallen Hamburg / Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg; Lodovico Corsini, Uccle; Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels; Yseult Gay / GAPEX VOF, Brussels; BPS22 Art Museum of the Hainaut Province, Charleroi; carlier | gebauer, Berlin; Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne; Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin; Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin; Peres Projects, Berlin; Sprüth Magers, Berlin/Cologne; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Facsimile), Berlin; Weng Fine Art AG, Monheim; Galerie Art: Concept, Paris; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Galerie Crèveœur, Paris; Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris/London/Salzburg; gb agency, Paris; Kamel Mennour Gallery, Paris; La Cinémathèque Française, Paris; Masathis, Paris; Musée d'Art moderne de la ville de Paris, Paris; Praz-Delavallade, Paris; Air de Paris, Romainville; Les Abattoirs, Musée – Frac Occitanie, Toulouse; Galleria Martina Simeti, Milan; Findart SaS, Torino; Galleria Franco Noero – Lara Favaretto, Torino; Museen der Stadt Linz, Linz; Filmmuseum Wien, Vienna; Maria Lassnig Stiftung, Vienna; Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna; Magasin III Stockholm Konsthall, Stockholm; Karma International, Zurich; Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich; New Art Exchange, Nottingham; Amir Shariat, Vienna; and numerous private lenders.

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