

The Badischer Kunstverein is pleased to present the two artists Karl Holmqvist and Joachim Koester in an extensive double exhibition titled 'Hymn to Pan.' While both artists work with sometimes widely differing media and forms of expression, they share a common interest in the repressed and taboo experiential spaces of our modern societies: the extrasensory and occult, the spiritual and transcendental that form a countercultural thread running through the history of industrial rationalization and modern rationality.

For the exhibition at Badischer Kunstverein Karl Holmqvist made a range of mandala symbols in the form of prints, wall objects, and sculptures, most of them produced on site. Mandalas are ritual symbols used in meditation. Originating in the Buddhist and Hindu religious traditions, they are also found in popularized form in Western appropriations of Far Eastern meditative practices. By translating the pictorial orders of the mandalas into clear graphic structures that also link up with the tradition of minimalism and its formal vocabulary, Holmqvist interrogates the aesthetics of the spiritual in regard to the boundaries between 'high' and 'low.' In their self-contained, repetitive geometrical structures the mandalas are close to Holmqvist's poems and Spoken Word pieces. In his video 'I'LL MAKE THE WORLD EXPLODE,' for instance, he operates with analogous techniques of linguistic rhythmicization and repetition. The work borrows lines from Grace Jones's song 'Corporate Cannibal,' in which the Afro-American singer addresses the unbridled avarice of globalized capitalism. Quotations and textual fragments contrast Jones, as icon of gay/lesbian culture, with the reality of homophobic attitudes of dancehall culture all the way to racist assaults exemplified here by Rodney King, brutally mistreated by police in 1991.

Joachim Koester's works also involve exploring and experimentally reconstructing rituals. For his film 'To navigate, in a genuine way, in the unknown necessitates an attitude of daring, but not one of recklessness (movements generated from the magical passes of Carlos Castaneda)' Koester and a mime artist rehearsed the bodily exercises that the writer and anthropologist Carlos Castaneda, in his book 'Magical Passes,' imagines as being an integral component of an old Mexican culture's practice of magic. Koester's performative exploration of this bodily ritual treads a narrow line between theatrical reconstruction, filmic documentation, and the ineffable of spiritual transcendence. Koester's 'The Hashish Club' walks a similar tightrope between the strict logic of material actions and experiential spaces that defy rational access. A large-scale installation evokes the atmosphere of the Hôtel de Lauzun, where, in the 1840s, a group of Parisian intellectuals experimented with hashish under the observation of the psychologist Dr. Jacques-Joseph Moreau. Using a range of media, 'Morning of the Magicians' also invokes the spirit of a past epoch of the spiritual: Thélèma Abbey, founded by the occultist, mystic, and poet Aleister Crowley in Cefalù, Sicily, in 1920. The Kunstverein exhibition title likewise derives from Crowley, 'Hymn to Pan,' a

homage to the Greek god known for his lust and licentiousness, being one of his most famous poems.

Neither Karl Holmqvist's nor Joachim Koester's interest in the practices of the spiritual and the occult involve a simple expression of belief in or a naïve invocation of the irrational. Rather both artists reflectively employ their chosen media to a both playfully simulating and analytical inquiring investigation of the cultural authority of the rational.

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