

Following a two-year absence from the world of gallery exhibitions, Berlin artist Jonathan Meese has chosen Paris as the venue for his reappearance.

Often described as the enfant terrible of the Berlin art scene, Jonathan Meese is now 40 — and as turbulent as ever. He is displaying his work at the two Galerie Templon spaces, with a group of recent paintings exhibited at the Rue Beaubourg venue and, opposite, an installation of sculptures at Impasse Beaubourg.

The new paintings are the fruit of a new phase in his exploration of the medium. The rich and diverse paintings overflow with collages, slogans and graffiti, producing an effect somewhere between humour and violence. The artist orchestrates a collision between impastos and varnish, furious brush strokes and delicate lines. And thus captures “History, both small and great” (Jean-Charles Vergne).

The sculpture installation offers an amused evocation of ten years of sculptural practice, featuring mini-installations, figurines and primitive and futuristic bronze busts. This retrospective approach echoes the major exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami that will be opening on 1 December 2010: Jonathan Meese: Sculpture, curated by Bonnie Clearwater. By bringing the sculptures together, they can not only “talk among themselves” — as the artist dreams of them doing — but also share their judgment of the paintings: “The sculptures have to be satisfied,” warns Jonathan Meese.

Born in 1971 in Tokyo, the artist spent time in both Berlin and Hamburg before taking up permanent residence in the capital. Cannibalising texts and images from sources as varied as Stanley Kubrick, Richard Wagner and the Marquis de Sade, he has created a mythology that is all his own. His works also have an obsessive focus on the artist himself, and conjure up the vital energy at the heart of his conception of art.

Jonathan Meese adopted a pluri-disciplinary approach right from the start of his career, encompassing installations, paintings, performance, music and video. Discovered in 1998 thanks to his first exhibition in Berlin and participation in the first Berlin Biennale, Jonathan Meese has since exhibited throughout the world: New York, Vienna, Barcelona, Tokyo and Mumbai. He has taken part in major collective exhibitions including Generation Z at New York’s PS1 in 1999, New Blood at the London Saatchi Collection in 2004, and Dionysiac at Paris’ Centre Pompidou in 2005. A major retrospective of his work, Mama Johnny, was held at the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg and Grenoble’s Le Magasin in 2006.

He has been concentrating primarily on performance since 2004: his improvisation on Wagner's Parsifal at the Berlin Staatsoper in 2005 and Noël Coward is Back at the Tate Modern in 2006 were both memorable events. More recently, he has been working on designing sets for shows at Berlin's Volksbühne theatre. In summer 2010, as part of the Salzburg Festival he designed the sets for the world première of Dionysos, a new opera by Wolfgang Rihm retracing Nietzsche's life.

Galerie Templon has been working with Jonathan Meese since 2001. This will be his fourth exhibition at the gallery.

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