

Galerie Guido W. Baudach is pleased to present the third solo exhibition of work by the New York based Norwegian artist Bjarne Melgaard (b. 1967).

Bjarne Melgaard has curated a number of themed group exhibitions this year, and his own installations have consistently formed their spatial and thematic nucleus. Apart maybe from the bright orange carpet laid out on the otherwise grey floor of the gallery, one's first impression of *The Night Within Us!* is that of a conventional Bjarne Melgaard solo show. There are a total of four paintings, all of them expressive abstract portraits executed in Melgaard's characteristically light palette, ranging from light blues and pinks through oranges, while darker shades are employed only for the contours of figurative elements and the integral lettering of the images. All paintings are in a horizontal format that explodes the given proportions of the cabinet-like exhibition space. Distributed across all four walls, the paintings engender a physical presence that is almost claustrophobic in its penetration. Most of the heads in Melgaard's portraits are painted against scenic backgrounds and here they are tilted to the side as though this were their only means of making any room for themselves in the spatial situation of the gallery. Bjarne Melgaard once again tests the limits here; both of the given space, and of the portrait genre.

But *The Night Within Us!* is more than just an exhibition of contemporary art. A framed poster hangs in the midst of the paintings. At its centre, surrounded by almost surreal sketches of the artist's alter-ego, stands a young woman wearing the glad rags of an eighties teenager and looking out at the viewer somewhat timidly. This is a depiction of 33 year-old Anne Lilia Berger Strand – better known by her stage name, Annie – a Norwegian singer-songwriter who has been making her own variant of danceable independent electro-pop for over a decade and has frequently worked with music greats such as British producer Richard X, Timo Kaukolampi from the Finnish synth-nerds Op:l Bastards, and singer and guitarist Alex Kapranos from Glasgow's Franz Ferdinand.

The poster points to the fact that the exhibition is part of a planned collaboration between pop music and contemporary visual art. Bjarne Melgaard himself has already realized a number of similar 'interdisciplinary' projects with Indie musicians such as Kim Gordon, bassist of Sonic Youth, and No Wave co-founder Lydia Lunch. Here he references his compatriot Annie in the title: *The Night Within Us!* is also the name of her forthcoming single. The accompanying video will be shot over the coming weeks, partly in Melgaard's New York studio and partly at the exhibition in Berlin. This in turn was inspired by the lyrics of Annie's song, which deal with love and loss, those apparently banal subjects that nevertheless always retain their currency and have always been an influence on Bjarne Melgaard's artistic practice. They are present everywhere in his work, at least as a subtext, even if the works are about Satanism (*Black Low*, 2002), snuff (*LeTeaser*, 2005) or child prostitution

(*Kidwhore in Manhattan*, 2008) on the face of it.

The central motifs in the portrait paintings created for *The Night Within Us!* – which can be seen as self-portraits of the artist as Annie – are the existential human need for tenderness, trust and partnership on the one hand, and the painful realisation of lies, deceit and abandonment; themes that are emphatically reflected in the pastose tears that flow from the wide eyes of the faces. But caution: Bjarne Melgaard's Annies are smiling.

Bjarne Melgaard has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions at home and abroad (selection): *Absolute Installation*, Nasjonalmuseet for Kunst, Arkitektur og Design, Oslo (2012-2011) / In the context of *Biennale Di Venezia 54*: Guest Professor *Beyond Death: Viral Discontents And Contemporary Notions About Aids*, Graduate Programme of Visual Arts at the Faculty of Design and Arts, Università IUAV di Venezia, Venice; curator of the exhibition *Baton Sinister*, Palazzo Contarini Corfù, Venice (2011) / *Bjarne Melgaard / Rod Bianco "Super Normal"*, De Appel arts centre, Amsterdam (2010) / *Jealous*, Bergen Kunstmuseum and Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo (2010) / *Norse Soul: the legacy of Edvard Munch, social democracy, old myths, anarchy and death longings*, Katzen Art Center, American University, Washington DC (2010) / *LOSS OF CONTROL*, Marta Herford (2008) / *Marie-Louise Ekman & Bjarne Melgaard*, Malmö Konstmuseum (2007) / *Paul Thek – Werkschau im Kontext zeitgenössischer Kunst*, ZKM, Karlsruhe and Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg (2007-2008) / *Euro-Centric. Part I*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2007) / *Hallo Maybe*, Haugar Vestfold Museum, Oslo (2005) / *PLAYLIST*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2004) / *Scam*, Bergen Kunsthall (2003), *Black Low: The Punk Movement Was Just Hippies with Short Hair*, Marta Herford (2002) / *The Myth Of A Young Washingmachine*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Oslo (2000).

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