

Badischer Kunstverein is pleased to present Jürgen Drescher with his most extensive solo exhibition in Germany to date. For over three decades, Drescher has been negotiating in his works the formal, poetic, and performative potentials of sculpture against the backdrop of artistic, economic, and ecological processes of value creation. The exhibition, which is titled *dig it*, highlights Jürgen Drescher's more (and most) recent works so as to pointedly draw on the artist's oeuvre from this point of origin, exploring the complexity of his artistic creativity over the past several decades. Above all, Drescher is a sculptor, yet he also works with text and video. These formats, previously ancillary in nature, will experience a new emphasis at the Kunstverein.

From the beginning of Jürgen Drescher's career, the strategies of transfer and context shifting have played a central role in his artistic approach—the act of shifting things, artifacts, or even situations from their everyday contexts into the space of art. In 1981, Drescher—while still studying under Klaus Rinke at the art academy in Düsseldorf and surrounded by fellow artists like Thomas Schütte, Katharina Fritsch, or Reinhard Mucha—had already turned a bar into an installation as his artistic contribution to that year's annual exhibition. The potential sales situation—the annual exhibition as “training” for the art market—was short-circuited with the real vending situation of the bar. In terms of form, the installation had been reduced to essentials, and precisely the circumstance that it was in fact fully functional—Drescher himself was bartending—already caused the margins between model and reality, form and performance, cultural and economic value to be blurred in a productive way.

Jürgen Drescher's work of the 1980s and 1990s was predominately characterized by transfer or by the transformation of real objects, as is apparent in the work *Scherengitter* (Expandable Gates, 1987), where interslidable latticed structures from public space are contrasted with the bourgeois architecture of the Kunstverein. Yet in recent years Drescher has specifically devoted himself to the technique of metal casting, which he employs to reproduce everyday objects. In taking recourse to the art of casting, Drescher has adopted a genuine sculptural technique that allows things to become an image of themselves: ladders, benches, boxes, or even soft materials like pillows, blankets, or sheets assume an abstract, almost minimalist language of form despite the inherent figurative concreteness of the cast.

In addition to calling on casting as a method of reproduction, Drescher has pursued the plastic modeling of figures and figurations, such as the new sculptures *Dian und Digit 1974* and *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1940*, which were specially created for this exhibition and are posited at its center. The latter piece shows Hitler sitting on a bench at Haus der Kunst in Munich, flanked by two museum staff members. This work mirrors the exorbitance of a political system that did not shy from taking over the cultural arena, where curators apparently reacted with utter submission.

Another topic that has repeatedly engaged Drescher's attention is the critical questioning of methods of economic expansion and the concomitant effects of an exploitation of natural resources. Several of the works in the exhibition may be interpreted against this background. The sculpture of primate researcher Dian Fossey and the gorilla named Digit conveys a scene where the scientist, flush to the ground, is carefully approaching the playful gorilla. Later, Digit was shot by poachers during one of many killing campaigns, the embodiment of an exploitation of nature for purely economic interests. Likewise dedicated to this theme is *Tuna* (2011–12), the figure of a dead tuna carved from Styrofoam and coated with epoxy resin lying gutted and chilled on the exhibition room floor—a symbol of this species threatened by heightened consumption and irresponsible overfishing.

Closely associated with these works of art are display cases containing various textual works by Drescher. Here the artist is seen to be venting his distress about the repercussions of human growth through quotes or a transcribed dialogue with a fellow artist. Also, Drescher's bold challenge "thun thun thun" (with a dual meaning in German of both "tuna" and the entreaty to "do something") alludes to the tuna situation, but also to the perpetual demand for enhanced performance and production. Finally, the video *Mönch* (Monk, 2012) portrays the artist himself as he pursues his morning rituals, thus contrasting global catastrophes with a positive picture of a living approach practiced in everyday life.

Jürgen Drescher (b. 1955 in Karlsruhe) lives and works in Berlin.

International solo and group exhibitions, amongst others: 2012 *Goldtausch*, Kunsthalle Nuremberg; FIAC Paris; 2011 Galerie Martin Klosterfelde, Berlin; 2009 *Fund*, Mai 36 Galerie, Zurich; 2008 Shanghai Biennale; *Heavy Metal*, Kunsthalle zu Kiel; 2007 *party!*, Galerie Isabella Czarnowska, Berlin; 2006 *Lichtkunst aus Kunstlicht*, ZKM, Karlsruhe; 2000 *ein/räumen*, Hamburger Kunsthalle.

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