

Nowadays it is something of a rarity to encounter an artist who is inseparable from his oeuvre. Such a rarity is Meuser. Meuser is not Michael, Konrad or Müller. Meuser is Meuser! Meuser misbehaves and challenges, flatters and in the process lays bare – with a charm all of his own. Even if his highly stringent and congruent oeuvre may at times give that impression, Meuser is certainly not a minimalist but rather a maximalist of ambivalence. He oscillates between a drily blustering philosopher from the Ruhr and a garrulous carpet-dealer from the Rhineland – and equally between the pun-loving cosmopolitan and the forever somewhat grim and gruff grandfather.

Where others ask themselves how much brain capacity one needs in order to stay more or less oneself amidst the conflicting priorities of forever shifting prevalent meanings – or even to be considered a straight type – Meuser has long since known the answer: “Herr Ober, zwei Doppelte!” [“Waiter, two double ones, please!”].

What prevails is “Das völlig harmlose Einerseits-Andererseits-Syndrom” [“The completely harmless on-the-one-hand-on-the-other-hand syndrome”]. And, perhaps most importantly of all: there are “Keine Schauspieler, nirgends” [“No actors, nowhere”].

His material may be scrap, but his weapon is wit.

When people study his works, it can sometimes happen that they take a premature short-cut and think that they are dealing here with a conceptual joker, or with the last system punk endowed with a considerable gift for humour, with someone who takes up items already consigned to the junk-yard and counterpoints them with socio-politically relevant, but often just daft titles or sets them in diverse other reciprocal relations – and this only to demonstrate on a kind of meta-level how keen we nevertheless are, against our better knowledge, to still accord this levelling out of importances its own value added.

To remind an affluent, over-saturated and thoroughly bored culture of this fact is certainly not wrong. In Meuser’s case, however, it is likely to be just wide of the truth.

His oeuvre may allow one to sense affinities with other artists. And it is certainly not free of irony. Its actual origins, however, are fundamentally different.

What are often forgotten and overlooked here are three characteristics inherent in his works – their undogmatic simplicity, their poetry and the sincerity of their gesture.

Meuser grew up in post-war Germany in the shadow of the Villa Hügel, the Krupp mansion in Essen. In the bombed-out and stripped bare economic heartland of the young Federal Republic.

Before the pits could again produce coal and new steel flow from the rolling mills, something had to be made out of what was there. And that was scrap. If you could not brush up and dust down your imagination, you had scant prospect of flourishing landscapes. The connection between the Ruhr region and metal was always fundamental – was always a classic love of, and necessary bond with, the material.

Meuser thus hangs part of his life on the wall and so hammers a personal, and precisely not purely satirical indentation into the levelled-out hum of our civilization. His invitation and, at times, his disinvitation to the latter is wit born of necessity.

Even if he now lives in the comparatively cosy South-West and is an internationally acknowledged artist – in his own way he is still walking beneath the “Mond von Wanne-Eickel” [“Moon of Wanne-Eickel”]. Perhaps as the Ruhr region’s maverick yet faithful local poet, so to say. For certain, however, simply and solely as Meuser.

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