

Nino Mier Gallery is pleased to present its first exhibition of new works by Ulrich Wulff, titled *Black Elk Speaks*. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, May 11th from 6 to 8:30 pm at the 1107 Greenacre Avenue, Los Angeles location.

In my upcoming exhibition at Nino Mier Gallery, I am showing a full circle of four large oil paintings, accompanied by ten small pencil drawings.

All of these artworks are figurative, more precisely portraits. The painted heads are hovering on monochrome backdrops, assembled in three confrontations and one individual portrait. The heads are each composed of distinctively modified color fields, and the energetic, yet thinly applied repetition of brushstrokes flattens the background and creates a smooth, at times specular surface, surrounding the humanoids like the sea, in which we all reflect, yet never fully identify.

The set of paintings in this exhibition is marked by acute color-form-contrasts and simplified figurative elements, that partly resemble comic strip images. The clown- type appears again – an old acquaintance, who inconsistently lingers in my imagery since the turn of the millennium. The clown is not only a metaphor for the artist and the social outsider (see e.g.: Heinrich Böll: *Ansichten eines Clowns* [The Clown]) but at the same time an image of the “real” man. Paradoxically it needs masking and role-playing to expose the “true” man in the context of an abstraction process. Thereby the distinctive marks of the clown become independent as autonomous elements. His round nose appears in the image space as a “free- floating” ball, his extended eyelashes stretch like feelers or antennae to an intensified perception.

Within the varied subjects a duality always appears: usually two figurations stand opposite each other, meeting and watching each other with the potential of contact. Or it is a matter of a “multiple I that communicates with itself. The stereotyped figurations shown in profile view leave the viewer outside – he is just a witness of what is happening.

The title of this exhibition is borrowed from a book of interviews with a Holy Clown of the Oglala Lakota, named Black Elk, who was active during the Ghost Dance Movement, and beyond. The characteristic of these clowns, the so-called Heyoka, was to behave contrary to everyone's everyday practice. Thus, every situation is rebound to its original potential, the source of all that is, where the Wakinyan, the Thunderbeings of the West, dwell, and that only the holy man can perceive and translate.

By questioning the rules of a society through humor, they redefine the purpose of life in a group,

from merely being organized as a secular machine towards happier goals, maybe even towards fulfillment.

Ulrich Wulff

Ulrich Wulff (b. 1975) has recently been the subject of solo exhibitions at venues that include Galerie Bernd Kugler, Innsbruck (2018); Freddy, Harris, NY (2017); and Truth and Consequences, Geneva (2017). Among his group exhibitions are *Peanuts*, Eighteenth Gallery, Copenhagen (2019); *It Ain't Though*, Ortloff Artspace, Leipzig (2019); *You Have Everything To Learn*, Truth and Consequences, Geneva (2018); *Lob Des Schattens*, Marc Straus, NYC (2017); *Back to the Shack*, Meliksetian Briggs, Los Angeles (2017); and *A Shape That Stands Up*, Hammer Museum (Off-Site), (2016). Wulff lives and works in Berlin.

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