

## **JONATHAN MEESE**

**“ERZHAGENERZ ERZVONERZ ERZTRONJERZ” LIEBT NUR DEN  
GESICHTSAUSDRUCK “KUNST”, VOOM.  
(ERZTRÜFFELSCHWEINCHEN “SCHLAU” GEFÄLLT NUR DER  
KUNST, BASTA) KUNST UNGLEICH EXTREMSPORT...**

**Opening**

Thursday, 29 November 2012, 7 p.m.

**Exhibition duration**

30 November – 26 January 2013

Jonathan Meese's work resembles a stage. He really lives it up on this stage, completely uninhibited, assuming ever-new roles, new costumes and adopting a new dramaturgy. Meese is not just an extraordinary performer, he also stands out as a draftsman, painter, sculptor, author and stage set designer. It seems that, with the greatest of ease, he has developed his own, unmistakable idiom in every genre he works with. This idiom lends his work a diversity, a pictorial force and quality which, according to Robert Fleck, hasn't been seen since Picasso. All of his works share a humour that tends to be grotesque as well as a powerful, authentic creative drive. Both are informed, even driven by art's aspiration to rule the world, which he described in 2006 for the first time as the "dictatorship of art" – something that he himself has postulated ever since..! This refers to the development of a new world order in which art is the law-giving force and free play is the basis of all life and creation. This utopian approach can be traced like a red thread running throughout all of the artist's works, bringing together the individual parts of his production to create a sort of total artwork. Art itself is utopia, that is to say, a non-site, which stands diametrically opposed to our social reality. And often he tackles things with just as much inhibition as he shows in his performances. Meese turns canvases into stages on which all manner of figures are united: marching men, often displaying erections, armed soldiers, wildly smooching animals, prurient-sweet Lolitas or amorphous rulers are recurring figures. With an almost somnambulistic certainty, he spontaneously places the figures and objects directly onto the largest canvases without any premeditation or preliminary sketches. He unites these contrasts to create a mesmerizing totality, which is only able to move in one direction: forward. This is visible also in the energy-laden gesture and in his placement of figures on the very front edge of the painting. Completely in keeping with the visual attack the palette has opened up, from his earlier predilection for more hushed shades to the striking signal colors. Bright yellow, blue, orange, green and red have come to replace black, brown or beige, dominating the new compositions. Formally, Meese remains true to his motifs: the self-portrait, the portrait of the ruler and the multi-figural historical painting are now rendered with much greater freedom. This material is never a depiction of real conditions but always the opposite. Meese's paintings are not self-referential, but rather "paintings serving to

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postulate a 'weltanschauung' or to quote the artist: propaganda material for the "dictatorship of art". For him the painting is linked with words with a short text on a dense network of formal and thematic information, lending it an emblematic dimension.

"Art is a total game ". Detaching himself from this principle, he ornamentises and caricatures all forms, words and symbols, extracting from their original semantic meaning, in the awareness that a symbol only has ideological power for as long as it has ideological power, as long as it is read in its specifically historical context. This attitude is provocative and is thus often criticized as being inadmissible. It is precisely here that the basic misunderstanding is revealed in an approach to this artistic position. Meese is not interested in provocation. With reference to the taboos of our society the essence of his aspiration for this artistic position. It is right here that the basic understanding is revealed when it comes to working with this artistic position. Meese is not interested in provocation. His reference to the taboos of our society is where the essence of his aspiration to utopia is to be found, for the taboos refer to the inviolable, the intangible. And for Meese this is synonymous with art.

(Excerpt from a text by Doris Mampe JONATHAN MEESE: KUNST UND UTOPIE Jonathan Meese: Art and Utopia)