

# SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY | Sanderstraße 28 | 12047 Berlin

## Janne Räisänen: In the name of Roses

9 November – 14 December 2024

### Press Release – November 2024

We are pleased to be able to show new works by the painter JANNE RÄISÄNEN, who lives and works in Berlin and Helsinki, at SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY.

*In the name of Roses* is the fifth solo show at the gallery by the Finnish artist, whom we have been representing since 2014.

In his new series of twelve canvases, Räisänen focuses mainly on portraits. In these works, he takes up current topics, references world politics, points to wars and questionable power relations. Equally, he draws thematically on popular culture, TV series, and the Berlin queer club world. The inner life and states of mind of the portrayed creatures are always present in these works.

At the gallery's entrance, we encounter *Die Alpenjägerin* (all works in the exhibition are from 2024): a female soldier with a bonnet or helmet and an old-fashioned collar whose melancholy gaze is directed into space; her flamboyantly red lips seem to lose colour that runs downwards over her chin – or is it blood? Behind her, we can make out bullets, firs are intimidated, and further away a burning building.

Another portrait is dedicated to the New York composer and performance artist Diamanda Galás: the singer's striking voice resonates in a rattling manner in the title *Diamanda Galashnikov*. Obviously Räisänen also alludes here to the arms industry: the assault rifle 'Kalashnikow AK-47', with which for almost eighty years people around the globe have been killed and killing, is familiar to almost everyone, and the Russian arms manufacturer Kalashnikov is known as one of the biggest profiteers of the current conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

In *Böse*, a tank sits on the head of a person wearing a cowboy hat – on the left, there are ghostly creatures and a small bird. In the title, Räisänen reveals to us that he refers to Martin Kippenberger's socio-critical series *Krieg böse* here.

At first sight at least, it seems things are more harmless in the work '*Lumberjack*' by Monty Python feat. John Wayne at WOOF! on the green wall in the gallery's last room: Räisänen transfers the late American western hero to Berlin's club scene, specifically into a bar in Schöneberg labelled "Best Bear Bar". Only on closer examination can we make out not just various creatures and animals, but also a kind of transparent gun that seems to shoot or ejaculate across the face of the figure portrayed here.

As happens here, Räisänen frequently allows the beholders access to his world through

words and allusions in his titles. They open up fields of associations, and name visual elements that in their combination usually remain surreal and ambiguous, simultaneously serious and humorous. In the narrow portrait format *In the name of Roses*, Räsänen takes us to a medieval Benedictine abbey where numerous monks are murdered, and at the same time to the Berlin of today: the title of Umberto Eco's novel *Il nome della rosa* is here mixed with "Roses", the name of the artist's favourite bar in Berlin Kreuzberg.

Janne Räsänen has created a memorial to the recently deceased British actor Maggie Smith, best known for the series *Downton Abbey* and the *Harry Potter* films: *Memorial of Dame Maggie Smith*. Surprisingly, on the canvas we see a rather masculine figure, gaunt and with a stubble, a purple hat, and several earrings, before a background that is reminiscent of a glowing sunset or a far-away fire. One of her eyes seems to have slumped downwards by 90 degrees, and fallen from her head, and she, too, has a strangely empty, melancholy, absent gaze.

The portrayed figures do not correspond to any ideals; rather, they stem directly from Räsänen's vast mental store of images. With his exuberant imagination and effervescent creativity, the Finnish artist places them into our world. And confronts us with them as part of a process of distortion and development that starts as a sketch on the canvas, is assembled into the finished painting, and then continues in the minds of the individual beholders as they engage with the works.

The exhibition will be on show until 14 December 2024 .

Opening hours:

Monday, Thursday, Friday: Noon - 6 pm

Saturday: Noon - 4 pm

& by appointment

The opening reception will take place on November 9 2024, at 4 pm,

Galerie SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY, Sanderstraße 28, Berlin-Neukölln.

For further information and images, please contact

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