

PRESS INFORMATION

MARC BRANDENBURG: HIRNSTURM II

28 OCTOBER 2021 – 30 JANUARY 2022

Collection of Contemporary Art

Frankfurt am Main, 28 October 2021. The Städel Museum is presenting a solo exhibition dedicated to Marc Brandenburg from 28 October 2021 to 30 January 2022. Approximately 130 drawings and one video work will be shown in a site-specific installation: Shrouded in black light, Brandenburg's drawings, inverted into the negative, are reminiscent of a visual diary of thoughts, memories, and sensory impressions from the last thirty years.

'For nearly three decades, the artist Marc Brandenburg has been working on a graphic Gesamtkunstwerk. In doing so, he constantly expands the boundaries of the traditional medium of drawing and transfers it to our present day – always at the interface with photography, the moving image, sound, or performance. His art builds a bridge to the Städel as a museum of images which, with more than 100,000 works on paper, is home to one of the most important graphic collections in Germany. The audience of the Städel Museum is invited to experience Marc Brandenburg, an inimitable artistic voice of our present', says Philipp Demandt, Director of the Städel Museum.

At the centre of Marc Brandenburg's artistic work is the drawing. Since the early 1990s, the artist has been developing his graphic oeuvre, which can also be understood as an almost endless series. To these ends, he resorts to the simplest means: the camera, a photocopier, later a computer, as well as paper and pencil. The starting point for his drawings are mainly photographs he has taken himself, as well as material from other sources. With the help of the copier or an image processing programme, he inverts these photographs and transfers the resulting negative motifs onto the drawings. At times, he precisely executes the background, while at other times the motif is left free; it is occasionally mounted on the empty pictorial background so that it seems to float in space. The presentation of his works in black light adds an additional layer to the pencil drawings and unifies the different contents into a single flood of images – or, as the exhibition title describes it: a *Hirnsturm* (Brainstorm).

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'It is this idea of an inner storm – this swirl of images, memories, and impressions, that is at the heart of the exhibition. Similarly, the drawings seem to be floating in some dark, undefined, "endless" space. It can be felt like a trip or remind you of a near-death experience. Though my drawings are rarely rooted directly in my biography – I never draw my own memories, meaningful moments, or significant objects – it's nevertheless present, if transformed, always with a certain detachment', says Marc Brandenburg about the exhibited works. The artist encounters the subjects and protagonists of his motifs in his own urban environment: from banal objects such as plastic toys, idols from pop culture, and costumed people who seem to have mutated into fantasy creatures, as well as demonstrators and the sleeping places of homeless people. A sense of ambiguity always resonates. Cheerful subjects can seem abysmal, while oppressive living environments radiate a peculiar beauty. Brandenburg does not judge, but rather merely records what he sees.

His video installation *Camouflage Pullover* from 2018 also deals bluntly with the realities of life. Brandenburg looks from the perspective of a German, gay person of colour at a world marked by racism and prejudice: By concealing performers with a simple jumper with knitted-on, racist-stereotypical faces and hands, he relentlessly exposes these grievances. Who is really behind the mask remains hidden from passers-by – an only ostensibly playful questioning of identities that many people are not able to do in real life. *Camouflage Pullover* is a continuation of a knitted work created as early as 1992, *Tarnpullover für Ausländer* (Camouflage Pullovers for Foreigners), which was conceived at the time under the impression of the racist riots in Rostock-Lichtenhagen. For the video work, Brandenburg developed wearable masks made of wool that were worn by friends of the artist in parks and streets in Berlin. He staged situations without a clear plot and captured the irritation of passers-by.

'Above all, it was important to me that there were people with all sorts of skin tones under the masks. The reactions of passers-by were also very important: that people walking past the camouflaged protagonists didn't take out their cell phones and film them, but simply reacted. I wanted the masked figures to only gesticulate, so you'd get the feeling that they were communicating with each other – that it's really up to the viewer to imagine what they're talking about', says Marc Brandenburg.

Marc Brandenburg lives and works in Berlin. Although born in Berlin in 1965, he spent most of his childhood (1968–1977) in the United States. It was not until 1977 that he and his family finally returned to West Berlin. As a young adult in the 1980s,

he came into contact with the Berlin club scene and worked as a bouncer until he finally devoted himself autodidactically first to fashion and its design in the late 1980s and finally switched to fine art in the early 1990s. In addition to the drawings that dominated his artistic activity from the very beginning, the *Tarnpullover für Ausländer* from 1992 are among his earliest works. They were presented in one of his first exhibitions at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in 1993 and transferred into our present time in 2018 with the video installation *Camouflage Pullover*.

The ambiguous exhibition title *Hirnsturm* (Brainstorm) can be traced back to, among other things, an eponymous solo exhibition at the Paul Morris Gallery in New York in 2002. Major solo projects over the past decade have included exhibitions at the Denver Art Museum in 2010, the Hamburger Kunsthalle in 2011, the Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg in 2012, the Kunstraum Potsdam in 2018 and, most recently, Deutsche Bank's PalaisPopulaire in his hometown of Berlin in 2021. His works are represented in major public institutions, including The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt am Main, the Kupferstichkabinette in Berlin and Dresden, the Federal Collection of Contemporary Art, and the Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg. In Frankfurt am Main, works by Brandenburg were last shown at the Frankfurter Kunstverein and the MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst in 2004 and 2006.

An exhibition in cooperation with the PalaisPopulaire, Berlin.

MARC BRANDENBURG: HIRNSTURM II

Exhibition dates: 28 October 2021 to 30 January 2022

Curator Städel Museum: Svenja Grosser (Deputy Head of the Collection of Contemporary Art, Städel Museum)

Initial Concept: Sara Bernshausen (Deputy Head of the PalaisPopulaire of the Deutsche Bank) in cooperation with Marc Brandenburg

Venue: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de

Visitor Services: +49(0)69-605098-200, info@staedelmuseum.de

Opening Hours: Tue., Wed., Fri., Sat., Sun. + holidays 10.00 am – 6.00 pm, Thurs. 10.00 am – 9:00 pm

Special Opening Hours: For information on special opening hours, for example at Christmas and New Year's, see www.staedelmuseum.de.

Admission: Prices during the special exhibition *Rembrandt in Amsterdam* (until 30 Jan 2022): Tue–Fri 16 EUR, reduced 14 EUR; Sat, Sun + holidays 18 EUR, reduced 16 EUR; free admission for children under 12. Tickets can be booked online at shop.staedelmuseum.de/en.

Catalog: The exhibition is accompanied by a catalog published by Kerber Verlag with extensive interviews with the artists, text contributions by Oliver Koerner von Gustorf, and an introduction by Sara Bernshausen. Softcover with flaps, English/German, ISBN 978-3-7356-0764-5, 35 euros.

Current COVID information for visiting the museum: An overview of the current regulatory requirements applying to individual visitors and groups can be found at www.staedelmuseum.de/en/covid-info. We advise you to check for updates immediately prior to your visit.

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Städel Blog (in German): for more background, don't miss a post: blog.staedelmuseum.de/blog-abonnieren