



Haus am Lützowplatz

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## ZIERVOGEL

### Wir sollen wie Hunde sein

March 31 - May 29, 2023

In 1500, Albrecht Dürer stylized himself into an ideal in his painting *Selbstbild im Pelzrock*. The painting appears like a selfie with a filter, that emancipated the field of fine arts from pure craftsmanship.

Nowadays, we are on the verge of creating a functional AI (Fake It Till You Make It) that will completely change the self-image in the mirror of artistic activity: Deep- or Machine Learning use the overlay of countless photos and create their own images from them. Computer systems will be more cross-creative and powerful in the near future to imitate many artistic expressions of humans.

*Wir sollen wie Hunde sein* is a push towards inevitable development, in the focal point of artistic activity, of man in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

ZIERVOGEL has conceived new, site-specific works in response to the architectural conditions and history of Haus am Lützowplatz, which, in combination with older works, transforms the exhibition space into an expansive installation, a three-part self-portrait.

#### Part 1: Parcours - *as if*, 2018-2023.

The framed, large-scale drawing *as if* (2018), like many of the artist's other similar "Wimmelbilder" is extremely rich in detail and invites the viewer to indulgently explore what is ostensibly presented as a grotesque, with sometimes very drastic anatomical details and excesses of violence. ZIERVOGEL's "Parcours" in Haus am Lützowplatz, however, forces visitors to walk through a narrow path bordered by metal bars in order to even get close to the exhibited drawing, which can ultimately only be viewed through the bars. Thus, the walk and the non-barrier-free view of the work become a physical experience that torpedoes the unhindered enjoyment of art and serves solely to restrain, constrict, and limit the audience's freedom of vision and movement in the otherwise empty space.

In this way, ZIERVOGEL places the act of viewing at the center of his aesthetics and thus refers, among other things, to a collective contemporary experience that every art lover has already had in front of the

box offices or famous masterpieces in the world's great museums, albeit here in a far more brutal manner.

### **Part 2: *Das Erste*, 2000**

The short video shows ZIERVOGEL at the beginning of his artistic career brushing his teeth. Three minutes daily, so the rule of thumb of many dentists, for the basic cleaning of the teeth. In a kind of over-affirmation and self-optimization, ZIERVOGEL's tooth brushing becomes more and more intense and aggressive and ends up in a shave due to the overflowing foam.

### **Part 3: *D:N:A Portrait*, 2022-2023 and *Südjapanisches Selbstportrait*, 2023**

ZIERVOGEL uses a new technology that makes it possible to encode arbitrary information in synthetically generated DNA molecules. It promises unprecedented efficiency and durability as a storage medium (up to 50,000 years, unlike, say, external hard drives, which can store information flawlessly for only 30 years), as well as saving on server farms that require constant electricity and cooling. The idea of storing information on DNA has been around since a Soviet physicist published it in the journal *Radiotekhnika* in 1964-65. The first successful implementation came in 2012, when Harvard biologist George Church encoded one of his books in synthetic DNA. The method was then further developed at ETH Zurich and is now being commercialized by the Swiss company *TurboBeads*, a spin-off of ETH Zurich. In 2018, this company succeeded in transferring the album "Mezzanine" by the British band Massive Attack into a DNA code and encapsulating the synthetically generated base pairs in millions of glass beads. ZIERVOGEL used this process to encode a file resolved in bit pixels, which provides an overview of his work over the last 20 years (<https://ralfziervogel.com>) and a drawing (Der Kaktus hat recht (<https://ralfziervogel.com/#DerKaktushatrecht>), 2004, ink on paper, 140 x 508 cm / Deichtorhallen Sammlung Falckenberg Hamburg) in full size, onto a synthetic DNA and, in a second step, mixed it with his own, human DNA. In the glass particles, the artist's genetic information was stored together with the visual information of the artworks he created. In this way, the artist united with his creation on a molecular level, as it were, and thus produced a self-portrait. In a third step, the tiny glass particles, as carriers of the work-hereditary information, were processed into a solution and spread on a Fabriano paper. This drawing, framed under glass, was embedded deep into the wall of the exhibition space at Haus am Lützowplatz. After the end of the project, the opening will be sealed and the work will remain permanently in the building.

Facing the *D:N:A portrait* on the other side of the gallery walls, we see an almost invisible figuration. A Shiva-like, human-sized blob composed of fat. ZIERVOGEL has left his own body imprint on the wall named *Südjapanisches Selbstportrait* - inspired by the body remains that can still be seen today, of people burned into the concrete, by the atomic bomb explosion in Hiroshima, 1945.

This work acts as a mirror, or distorted image to the *D:N:A portrait* in the room, similar to a house ghost that disturbs its counterpart and questions its existence.

Three installations that have developed from different schools of thought, along European ideas of freedom of the modern era, and in a peculiar way place the production of art and the process of its contemplation in a multi-layered contemporary complex of problems. The common vanishing point of all

the works on display is the human body in its physical and genetic makeup and as a site of sensory and mental experience.

ZIERVOGEL (\*1975 in Clausthal-Zellerfeld) lives and works in Berlin and New York. He works in a variety of media, but has become best known for his large-scale, extremely detailed ink drawings, whose world of figures is transposed into drastic sceneries. There, on a white background, bodies become free-floating, ornamental webs that interpenetrate each other in the most varied of ways, sensually as aggressively.

From 2000 to 2005, ZIERVOGEL studied fine arts at Universität der Künste (UdK) in Berlin. Between 2013 and 2016, he taught sculpture at Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee. In the context of solo exhibitions, ZIERVOGEL's works have recently been shown at Deichtorhallen Sammlung Falckenberg Hamburg ("as if," 2018-2019), Kunsthalle Göppingen ("RAM," 2017), and EIGEN + ART Lab, Berlin ("Ganz Unten," 2016), among others. In 2020, he bequeathed the "ARCHIVE RALF ZIERVOGEL, 2000-2020" to the Kunststiftung Bernhard Sprengel und Freunde in Hanover, which brings together all of his works, activities, and archival materials from the period indicated in the dating.

Artist talk with Matthias Reichelt

**Saturday, April 1, 2023, 4 p.m.**

Exhibition talks

Dr. Marc Wellmann in dialogue with Dr. Harald Falckenberg

**Saturday, April 22, 2023, 4 p.m.**

Dr. Marc Wellmann in dialogue with Marlene A. Schenk

**Thursday, May 11, 2023, 7 p.m.**