

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Jonas Lipps
'ZEIT DER NURAGHEN, TEIL ZWEI'

29 April – 24 June 2023
Preview: Friday 28 April, 5–8pm

Tanya Leighton is pleased to announce 'Zeit der Nuraghen, Teil Zwei', an exhibition of new works by Jonas Lipps. This is his second solo exhibition at the gallery.

Hesitant to over-define, the works on view are the accumulation of many things, not illustrations of one closed thought. Instead, they remind us that ambiguity, uncertainty and chance are the building blocks of existence. A purposeful variety of painterly media and reference material reinforce this anti-authoritative vein. Crafted on found paper, some drawings bear signs of age or seemingly unintended adornments – like saw tooth pointed edges, suggestive of some previous purpose unrealised. Paintings on masonite frequently utilise what would normally be considered the back of the sheet, so that pigment is ground into a lattice of ridges and depressions, giving the resulting image a velour-like veneer that anonymises artistic hand.

The puzzlingly familiar scenes – made uncanny and unfixed through layers of casein and collage, games of chance, appropriation and misquotation – could just as soon be the products of a parallel society that observes and documents our own but was never privy to any rationale for why we do the things we do.

Jonathan Swift's traveller, Lemuel Gulliver, appears in a number of works. Gulliver, the comic misanthrope whose seafaring mis-adventures brought him over and over again to the shores of civilisations that, in their absurdity, revealed striking similarities to our own. We see him tied down by the Lilliputians – a tiny people whose community grinds to impasse, or worse, war, over the most trivial of small disagreements.

Figures like Gulliver are regulars in Lipps' ensemble: the lone traveller, thrown by chance into societies that teach them, but to which they don't wholly belong. Mowgli from Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* is another subject. Both stories have been made and remade, tweaked and updated to suit the times for hundreds of years. The roles that their characters play are so predetermined that they can also be used to point to some enduring attributes of humanity – for better or for worse. Another recurring persona is the snake – a well-worn archetype of evil and a historically villainous infiltrator of society. In these new renditions, the snake is atrophied and impotent, at times mistakable for a worm, a piece of rope or just another line on the page.

In one work, an array of black shapes of pooled watercolour oscillate between depicting theatre seats, tombstones and kneeling figures. The perspective could be that of the film projectionist, peering down from the little window at the back

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of the theatre. The shapes in the room are painted such that they seem to illustrate a puncture in the fabric of the existence they depict, revealing a hazy, measureless chasm underneath. On both masonite and paper, a hulking, windowless train in the shape of a crucifix glides confidently down the tracks. Like an extruded urn, whatever it carries seems like something that should not be mobile – that should be sought out rather than delivered.

Cinemas, cemeteries, trains and ships are all places where we are transported – either metaphorically or physically, and sometimes both. They are places where we are at once alone and with others – often with others we have never met and will never see again. Michel Foucault referred to these places as *heterotopias*, setting them in contrast with utopias and dystopias. They are worlds within worlds – literally *other places*. Within them, disparate existences are brought into the same space – sometimes bound by a temporary unity of purpose, be it two hours of entertainment or eternal rest.

These kinds of spaces and the feeling of being within them are the backdrops of 'Zeit der Nuraghen, Teil Zwei'. Whether narrativised or abstracted – borrowed from classic tales or invented whole cloth – these works place their audience in the role of the seafaring traveller. They invite speculation while simultaneously remaining just out of grasp, crafting a vision of humanity that is both scripted and ambivalent, familiar and anonymous. In these sites of projection, a multitude of potentialities are superimposed. Which one rises to the surface is as unpredictable as the toss of a dice or the course of a ship lost at sea.

Jonas Lipps (born in 1979 in Freiburg, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. Solo exhibitions include 'Time Of Nuraghi', Josey, Norwich in 2021; 'Jonas Lipps' at Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg in 2019; 'WIWIFOOD' at Bureau, New York, and Tanya Leighton, Berlin in 2018, among others. His work has been included in group exhibitions at Tokyo Arts and Space Hongo, Tokyo; Klosterfelde Edition, Berlin; Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg; Antenna Space, Shanghai; and Metro Pictures, New York, just to name a few.

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The gallery is open by appointment, Tuesday – Saturday, 11–6pm.