

PRESSRELEASE

July 2023

CORNELIUS VÖLKER

31 August 2023 to 7 January 2024

Whether lighter, leaf or lips, or heroin, heart or hands – as diverse as the motifs in Cornelius Völker’s (*1965) oeuvre are: the artist’s spirited and vividly coloured style of painting, often exploring familiar and everyday subjects shown in a new light, has always been characteristic of his work. Time and again, also objects generally deemed hardly worthy of painting find their way into Völker’s art. In this first institutional retrospective staged in his home city of Düsseldorf, the Kunstpalast is showing 85 oil paintings and 50 works on paper from all phases of the artist's career.

Even during his final years as student at the Academy of Art Düsseldorf, Cornelius Völker developed his powerful style of figurative painting, in which realism and an expressive, impasto application of paint combine to form a distinct pictorial language. The artist lays bare surprising facets of the depicted motifs with a great deal of both virtuosity and humour. In the process, a fundamental theme continuously explored by the painter is time.

“Cornelius Völker’s painting is about the appearance and disappearance of things, making us aware of our perception of time, which although linear and constant occurs with complex accentuation and concentration in human history and culture,” points out Felix Krämer, Director General of the Kunstpalast. “The selection of work shown in our exhibition and its narrative connection points to Völker’s multifaceted and multilayered portrayal of time. It illustrates the inner connections existing within this apparently disparate image world,” explains Krämer.

Nine exhibition chapters guide viewers through Völker’s oeuvre. The introductory room explores the question as to the relevance of oil painting as a medium in the 21st

PRESSECONTACT

Sarah Wulbrandt
Head of Press
T +49 (0)211-566 42 500
sarah.wulbrandt@kunstpalast.de

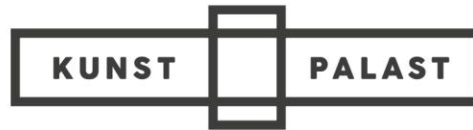
Christina Bolius
Press
T +49 (0)211-566 42 502
christina.bolius@kunstpalast.de

KUNSTPALAST

Ehrenhof 4-5
40479 Düsseldorf
www.kunstpalast.de

PAGE

1/3



PRESSRELEASE

July 2023

century. Cornelius Völker's pictures radiating with vibrant colours demonstrate how works of art can sharpen our perception and thus enhance our awareness of the present moment.

The chapter "People and Guinea Pigs" illuminates the ways in which Völker explores the tradition of the still life: In the paintings depicting guinea pigs as if they were pop stars, time seems to stand still and the different ways of painting take centre stage.

On the subject of "Temptation", Völker has created a wealth of paintings: they feature chocolate, coffee, alcohol, but also harder drugs as well as a few handguns. They present unusual motifs, polarizing and touching upon a dark side of our existence.

Depictions of the human being and their precarious vulnerability are introduced in the chapter "Bodies". Pictures of used tampons and plasters, of scars and organs, or of people stretching their throat entice viewers to take a detailed look when we would normally tend to avert our eyes.

"Cornelius Völker is as little afraid of existential themes as of humour and unconcealed decoration. The physical characteristics of his pictures illustrate the time the painter spent with his respective work. The only time that he is unable to control, and does not need to, is that of the viewer. The medium of painting is very generous with this time – we are in a position to decide for ourselves. Völker's works clearly suggest that we should give a great deal of time back to this outstanding painter," curator Kay Heymer is convinced.

An important theme for Cornelius Völker is that of "Plants", the depiction of which is particularly well suited to drive home the notion of time passing. As regards this theme, the artist revisits a long tradition of European painting: Flower still lifes symbolising the transience of life.

PRESECONTACT

Sarah Wulbrandt
Head of Press
T +49 (0)211-566 42 500
sarah.wulbrandt@kunstpalast.de

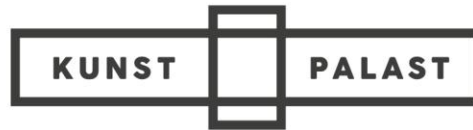
Christina Bolius
Press
T +49 (0)211-566 42 502
christina.bolius@kunstpalast.de

KUNSTPALAST

Ehrenhof 4-5
40479 Düsseldorf
www.kunstpalast.de

PAGE

2/3



PRESSRELEASE

July 2023

In another room, the section "Flowing Colours" presents around 50 works on paper, which, alongside paintings, play an important role in Cornelius Völker's oeuvre. The drawings and watercolours on display date from 1998 to 2023 and were often created in parallel to paintings on the same themes, and some of them take up the same motifs. Nevertheless, rather than being preparatory studies or sketches, these works exist in their own right.

In many of his still lifes the artist refers to the tradition of painting, as is illustrated in the room "Ephemerality". Whether it is a vase with flowers, a lit lighter, a still life of pickled fruit, or the ash left by an extinguished candle: Völker explores old motifs traditionally used for depictions of ephemerality and transfers them to the present.

An extensive group of works introduces "Paper" as a motif in different variations: snippets, newspapers, photographs, Post-it notes, postcards, crumpled up, stacked, hung up – the significance of this material for Völker is also illustrated by the wealth of his pictures on the theme of "Books", represented by four paintings shown in a separate exhibition section in the final room, depicting art books stacked and flipped open, but also a pile of books turning to ash: Another meditation on ephemerality.

Cornelius Völker studied at the Academy of Art Düsseldorf with A.R. Penck and Dieter Krieg from 1989 to 1995. In 2005 he was appointed Professor of Painting at the Academy of Art Münster. He lives and works in Düsseldorf.

The exhibition is presented in collaboration between the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf and Museum MORE in Gorssel.

Curators: Kay Heymer for the Kunstpalast, Maite van Dijk for Museum MORE in Gorssel

Partner:  **NATIONAL-BANK**
Mehr. Wert. Erfahren.

PRESSECONTACT

Sarah Wulbrandt
Head of Press
T +49 (0)211-566 42 500
sarah.wulbrandt@kunstpalast.de

Christina Bolius
Press
T +49 (0)211-566 42 502
christina.bolius@kunstpalast.de

KUNSTPALAST

Ehrenhof 4-5
40479 Düsseldorf
www.kunstpalast.de

PAGE

3/3