

Exhibition

unputdownable

(Oxford dictionary)

/ʌnput'daʊnəbl/

adjective – INFORMAL

1. *(of a book) so engrossing that one cannot stop reading it***Guy Allott****Norbert Bisky****Edi Dubien****Kris Knight****David Medalla****Norbert Witzgall**

With book recommendations by **ivallan's Second-Hand & Exceptional Books**, Berlin, and Guy Allott, Cara Benedetto, Norbert Bisky, Matthew Blaise, Douglas Boatwright, Vee Bozek, Edi Dubien, Oriane Durand, Mascha Jacobs (*Dear Reader*), Kris Knight, Sergio Matalucci, Bettina Mertel, Silke Nowak, Isabel Parkes, Gabriel Rossell Santillán, Anna-Lena Wenzel, Norbert Witzgall.

Curated by Klaus R. Voss (exhibition) and Norbert Witzgall (book selection).

September 8 – October 28, 2023

Opening hours: Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6 p.m. or by appointment

Additional opening hours during BERLIN ART WEEK on Sunday, September 17, from 1 – 5 p.m.

Events

Friday, September 8, 6 - 9 p.m. | opening

tba | readings by Oriane Durand (curator, Berlin) and Mascha Jacobs (*Dear Reader*)

Press preview

Thursday, September 7, from 11 a.m. or by appointment

Text

Mountains is pleased to present **unputdownable**, a group exhibition of selected and new works by Guy Allott, Norbert Bisky, Edi Dubien, Kris Knight, David Medalla, and Norbert Witzgall. Sharing the same genre and subject matter, these portraits all depict men*. The resulting 'community of bodies' aims to question a traditional idea of masculinity, a concept that – since Stonewall, and with feminism, postmodernism, etc. – has given way to controversial and emotionally discussed 'tessellated' notions of masculinity*ies. Despite the diverse emancipatory movements mentioned, it remains clear that tenderness, vulnerability and intimacy rarely seem to be available to men* as coping strategies. Instead, externalization, overemphasized rationality, violence, and control are still associated with 'the male' (particularly now, in the wake of a conservative backlash). What do men* feel they need to hold on to?

The selection of paintings on display proposes to take up a search for delicate, questioning or dazzling images of masculinity*ies. While the portraits reflect the painters' individual perspectives and desires, the books presented alongside expand the spectrum of possible masculinit*ies – these volumes are the *unputdownables* of befriended authors, curators, artists and avid readers. The gallery is turned into a reading room, aiming to expand the reading and thinking of identities unfolding in the portraits and texts. On accompanying evenings, Mascha Jacobs (*Dear Reader*) and Oriane Durand (independent curator) will read from the books which will also be presented in a zine published for the exhibition.

Guy Allott (1972, Hexham, England)

studied at the Royal College of Art and lives and works in London, UK. The artist works primarily in the media of painting, woodcut, sculpture and ceramics, his current oil paintings are characterized by their impasto, bold colors and psychedelic forms. Guy Allott often draws from science fiction and landscape painting to create works that are fantastic and playful. At the same time he remains somewhat apart from these genres themselves, satirising and twisting their tropes. His first solo exhibition at Mountains in 2021, for instance, is conceived as a kind of painterly spin-off on Mary Shelley's 1818 Gothic novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*.

Guy Allott is most often shown in solo and group exhibitions in the UK, but has also had numerous exhibitions in Germany, the US and elsewhere. Notable exhibitions include Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin, DE); Whitechapel Gallery (London, UK); The Drawing Room (London, UK); Zabłudowicz Collection (The Library of Babel, curated by Anna-Catharina Gebbers, London, UK); François Ghebaly/Chung King Project (Los Angeles, USA); MAC VAL (Vitry-sur-Seine/Paris, FR).

Works by Guy Allott are in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum and the British Library in London, the Zabłudowicz Collection, the UBS Art Collection, the Fidelity Art Collection, and many other public, private, and corporate collections.

Norbert Bisky (1970, Leipzig, GDR)

lives and works in Berlin, Germany and Andalusia, Spain. He studied at the University of the Arts in Berlin and Madrid and is one of the most successful representatives of contemporary figurative painting. The artist translates personal experiences of terror, journeys to Brazil, and influences from the media world into color-intensive scenes of beauty, sexuality, violence, and destruction. In Germany, Norbert Bisky is one of the most renowned painters of his generation.

His works have been shown in numerous international solo and group exhibitions, including the Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland; Haus am Waldsee, Berlin; Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, Latvia; Kunsthalle Rostock; Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin; Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel; Maison Rouge, Paris, France; and the Beijing Biennale, China.

Norbert Bisky's work is represented in the following public collections, among others: Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; Berlinische Galerie, Germany; Kunsthalle Rostock, Germany; Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig, Germany; Deutsche Bank Collection Frankfurt, Germany; Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, USA; Le FNAC Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, France; Hall Art Foundation, USA.

Norbert Bisky was also a visiting professor at Geneva's HEAD School of Art from 2008 to 2010 and at Braunschweig University of Fine Arts from 2016 to 2018. In 2013 he designed the set for the performance *Masse* for the Staatsballett Berlin.

Edi Dubien (1963, Issy-les-Moulineaux, Frankreich)

lives and works in Paris and Vendôme, Loire. The self-trained artist works mainly within the field of painting, but also sculpture and installation. Important themes of his works are childhood, nature, resilience and his own trans* process.

Short bios

"Edi Dubien takes up the image of the river to talk about his life, his body and his work. The river, a natural element in motion, keeps racing, flowing – an unpredictable, violent and calming ecosystem. It's a territory whose finitude cannot be determined, a body that performs infinitely. In this sense, the question of gender as a performative construct finds an apt mirror with his approach to the living. Through his paintings, drawings and installations, the artist incorporates his history, his experience, his body into forms and images. Beyond the autobiographical and introspective dimension, each of his works reveals a body that transcends time. A battered, fragmented, magnified, hybrid, raped body. A body with a crutch, leaning on a long branch. A body that holds itself upright. A body without measure, without limits, not stopping to resist." (Julie Crenn)

Edi Dubien's work is most frequently shown in solo and group exhibitions or art fairs inside France, but has been presented in Japan, Korea and Switzerland, to name a few. Notable exhibitions include Musée d'Art Contemporain Lyon (FR); MAC VAL (Vitry-sur-Seine/Paris, FR); Maison des Arts de Malakoff (*HERstory, des archives à l'heure des postféminismes*, curated by Julie Crenn, Malakoff/Paris, FR).

Mountains, Berlin, is pleased to present works by Edi Dubien for the first time in Germany. Currently, works by the artist can also be viewed in the large thematic show *Over the Rainbow* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, as well as in a solo exhibition at the Maison des arts Georges et Claude Pompidou in Cajarc and in group exhibitions at MAC Marseille and (from October) at Les Sheds in Pantin/Paris.

Works by Edi Dubien are in many public and private collections, including Centre Pompidou and MAC VAL in Paris/Île-de-France, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, Collection FRAC Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (Marseille), Collection FRAC Poitou-Charentes and Collection Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris.

Kris Knight (1980, Toronto, Kanada)

graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD University) and lives and works in Toronto. His narratives revolve around representation, queerness and intimacy. He is interested in the portrayal of diverse modes of masculinity, transforming various stereotypical traits often used to demean queer men into work that celebrates tenderness, vulnerability and ambiguity. His romantic paintings and portraits are simultaneously intimate as they are remote; presenting emotional worlds: portals of the artist's past and present - retreating from the muchness of the world as much as they reflect it. The reflexivity of his narratives is rooted in personal memory but also depict life in the present, where halcyon queer moments have impact without being sensationalized. The pastel and tonal oil paintings he makes conjure a series of shifting moods, themes and experiences that are connected by a wide range of positions regarding the private and public self. Working from personal images of staged scenes in the studio as well as found imagery and historical references, Knight's paintings present a quiet, elegant world dominated by sensitivity and subtle melancholy.

Kris Knight is most frequently shown in solo, group exhibitions and fairs in Canada and France, as well as in the USA, Germany and the Netherlands, among other countries. His prominent exhibitions include College of Wooster Art Museum (*Shapeshifting. Contemporary Masculinities*, Wooster, Ohio, USA); MABA (*O! Watt Up, de Watteau et du Théâtre*, Nogent-sur-Marne/Paris, FR); Galerie Alain Gutharc (Paris, FR).

Works by Kris Knight are in the following collections, among others: Queen's University, Kingston, Canada; The Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, USA; The Oppenheimer Collection / Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, USA; The Walton Family Collection, USA; 21c Museum of Contemporary Art, Louisville, USA; Royal Bank of Canada; Gucci, Rome; The Collection of Patrick McMullan Company.

Kris Knight is also known to a wider audience for his collaboration with the fashion house Gucci, for which he reinterpreted their historic Flora print.

David Medalla (1942, Manila, Philippines – 2020, Manila, Philippines)

lived an eventful life between London, Paris, New York, Marseille, Manila and Berlin, and over the course of seven decades created a multifaceted body of work, including drawings, paintings, collages, sculptures, neon works, kinetic art, performances and participatory art.

In 2021/2022, a two-part exhibition at the Bonner Kunstverein and Museion Bolzano reintroduced David Medalla to a wider audience as the first comprehensive show of the artist's work in Europe. "Medalla's work is characterized by absolute openness and freedom of expression, exploring the possibility of exchange and the overlapping of art and life by linking the great themes of the present such as ecology, cultural identity, sexuality and work ethics beyond a socially prescribed pigeonhole thinking.

Heavily influenced by 19th- and 20th-century European art and literature, and an active figure in the so-called 'Swinging London,' Medalla was influential in the short-lived but pioneering Signals Gallery, London (1962-64), as well as in the experimental performance collective The Exploding Galaxy (1967-68) and the politically engaged group the Artists for Democracy, of which he was president (1974-1977). With artist Adam Nankervis, he founded The Mondrian Fan Club (1994) and the London Biennial (2000), where processes of collaboration and exchange remained central. The diversity of his restless production and his ceaseless search for points of connection reveal a quest for the 'unity of the whole' through an engagement with difference and a deeply experiential and experimental relationship to being. His work reflects paradoxes and traumas as components of cultural identity - an identity that for him remains a multi-temporal and multi-directional process." (Museion Bolzano)

The artist's prominent exhibitions include *White on White*, 1966 and *When Attitudes Become Form*, 1969, both curated by Harald Szeemann at Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland; *documenta 5 (Individual Mythologies)*, 1972, Kassel; and Bonner Kunstverein / Museion Bozen, 2022 (*Parables of Friendship*, curated by Fatima Hellberg and David Cairns). Medalla has participated in the 57th Venice Biennale (2017, curated by Christine Macel), the 14th Lyon Biennale (2017, curated by Emma Lavigne), the 8th Asian Pacific Triennial, Brisbane, AU (2015), the 9th Mercosul Biennial, Porto Alegre (2013), the 16th Sydney Biennial, AU (2008, curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev), Performa 07, New York, US (2007), and the 2nd Johannesburg Biennial (1998). Other recent exhibitions featuring Medalla's work were held at institutions such as Tate Modern, London (2016); Jewish Museum, New York (2014); Tate Liverpool (2013/2014); TRAFU, Szczecin, PL (2013); *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, curated by Germano Celant, Fondazione Prada, Venice (2013); *Jeu de Paume*, Paris, France (2013); *Migrations*, Tate Britain, London (2012).

Works by David Medalla can be found in the permanent collections of the National Museum of the Philippines, Ateneo Art Gallery in Manila, Auckland Art Gallery, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane, National Gallery Singapore, and Tate Modern in London, among others.

Short bios

Norbert Witzgall (1976, Münchberg, Germany; lives and works in Berlin)

Witzgall's painting circles the portrait as a genre, with a focus on the tensions between person and persona, presentation and representation. Witzgall's portraits are drawn from a rich archive of photographic source material and together form an anachronistic community of Hollywood actors, friends, collectors, and historical figures. His fascination with the intersection of private and public constructions surrounding identity unites these categories of people and creates a fluid, diaristic practice.

Witzgall studied fine arts at the Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg, the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, at the École supérieure des Beaux Arts Lyon and the Berlin University of the Arts. Witzgall has had numerous exhibitions in Germany and abroad: solo exhibitions at Autocenter, Berlin; Deweer, Otegem and Brussels; Evans & Witt, London; Nice & Fit, Berlin, and Venetia Kapernekas, New York etc.; works have been shown at institutions including the Accademia Brera, Milan; the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; the Kunstverein Nürnberg in der Albrecht-Dürer-Gesellschaft; the Musée des Beaux-Arts Eugène Leroy, Tourcoing, France; the Studio Kara Walker, New York; and galleries like Exile, Vienna/Berlin; Mountains, Berlin and Night Gallery, Los Angeles; his work has been shown at the art fairs Art Cologne, Art Brussels and Art Athina.

Parallel to his artistic practice, Norbert Witzgall has been teaching at the University of Fine Arts Berlin (UdK Berlin) since 2014; first at the Institut für Kunstwissenschaft und Ästhetik, then as a visiting professor, and currently as a lecturer. In addition, he was a Visiting Professor in the Masters Program of the Painting and Printmaking Department at VCU in Richmond, Virginia. Further teaching activities have taken him to the Academy of Fine Arts in Stuttgart and the International Summer Academy of Fine Arts in Salzburg, among others; he has held recent lectures at numerous art colleges including those in Stockholm, Graz and Stuttgart. For many years previously, Witzgall was involved in art education and text production for Berlin institutions such as the SMPK, the HKW or the berlin biennial. He has been part of artistic and curatorial projects developed for After the Butcher, Berlinische Galerie, ngbk and HAU (all Berlin).

Most recently, Norbert Witzgall co-curated the exhibition *Klassenfragen – Kunst und ihre Produktionsbedingungen* at Berlinische Galerie.

For detailed CVs of the artists please contact the gallery.

Gallery

Mountains, a gallery specialized in contemporary art at Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz in Berlin was founded in August 2019. Currently Mountains represents 12 international artists of different ages, including emerging young positions. Furthermore, the re-contextualization of older or previously little noticed artists is a concern of the two gallerists. The exhibition program is complemented by publications, events, participation in fairs; in 2022 Mountains participated in ART COLOGNE for the first time.

Mountains	@mountains_berlin	#mountainsberlin
Guy Allott	@guy_allott	#guyallott
Norbert Bisky	@norbertbisky	#norbertbisky
Edi Dubien	@edidubien	#edidubien
Kris Knight	@krisknight	#krisknight
David Medalla	@david_medalla_	#davidmedalla
Norbert Witzgall	@norbertwitzgall	#norbertwitzgall

Social media

For further information and press images please contact the gallery.

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