

In Review: Berlin's Must-See Gallery Shows This March, from John Bock to Monika Sosnowska

Alexander Forbes, Friday, March 21, 2014



John Bock, "Knick-Falte in der Schädeldecke"
Photo © Alexander Forbes

John Bock, "Knick-Falte in der Schädeldecke," [Sprüth Magers](#)

There's an oft bandied-about saying that Sprüth Magers is Berlin's Kunsthalle. Never has that been more accurate than during the gallery's first John Bock exhibition. The show opens with a rather demure amuse-bouche: a wall of messy sketches on the right — *Pole Poppenspüler* (2010-2014)—and, in the far quadrant of the space, an odd little anthropomorphic sculpture made from a cardboard box and two buckets stacked atop one another, what look to be broom handles painted in stripes for arms and legs, and a stuffed sweater sleeve for a head. Uncanny, yes, but it's not even close to adequate prep for what's to come.

Entering the gallery's main hall, blacked out entirely on this occasion, you are thrown into a version of Bock's set for the exhibition's central film work, *Unzone Eierloch* (2014). That 48-minute loop plays in the far corner and takes the viewer from a not-so-distant reality—a teacher figure lectures two younger protagonists through a chain fence in some darkened industrial setting—to dream sequences, which see noir-style shots of a topless, dominant female character performing vaguely scientific-looking rituals and slaughtering and dissecting a humanoid figure. On the opposite side of the space, a series of flatscreen monitors dives deeper into each of the five dream sequences.

The set-cum-installation itself is a masterpiece and steals the show. It brings together a mad range of found objects—squashed cans of egg-filled ravioli and other foodstuffs, children's clothes and blankets, paintings, lamps, a hospital curtain, and a bike wheel—with sculptural elements distinctly reminiscent of Franz West. The installation is immersive; one can easily lose a half hour searching through its detritus to unpack its creator's pathologies and end up nowhere. Curators stumped to fill a fall or spring slot: Just hit cut and paste.

Through April 12.