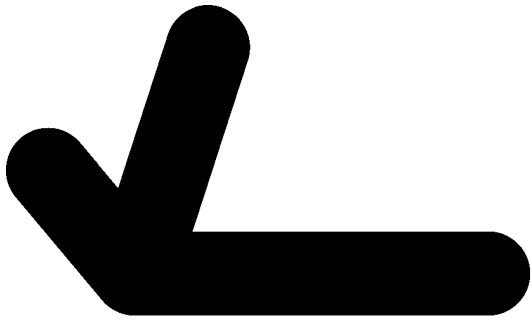




Press Release
Gods in Exile
2 Pages

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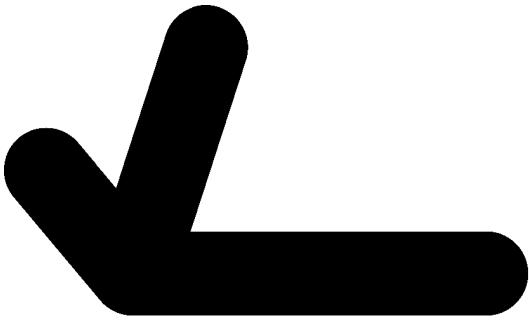
Gods in Exile Salvador Dalí, Albert Oehlen et al.

The myth of the artist, the artist as a pop star and its ironic breaks are the theme of the exhibition Gods in Exile as of March 2006. On the basis of the works of the important contemporary painter Albert Oehlen, Kunsthau Graz is presenting an exhibition on the metamorphosis and mythology of the artist image.

In works of Albert Oehlen, Salvador Dalí, Arnold Böcklin, Christian Ludwig Attersee and Karel Teige, mythology becomes a determinative constant as a traditional principle of ordering the world into its idols. The artist figure as the central anchor point of this order appears as the creator of order and as the creator of itself. In Albert Oehlen we find an artist who, to a vast degree and with extreme consistency, eludes any unambiguous interpretation. In the early 1980s, his painting became famous in the context of the "Neuen Wilden" and was also a manifesto of his opposition. Oehlen's work and his contradictoriness are still of interest today. Today's reception sees this artist above all with regard to his analysis of painting and art history itself and their placement in contemporary discourses of political culture in various contexts.

Among the significant figures of reference in modernism there are those that posed problems for conventional reception, whose contradictoriness put them at odds with "official" history. Salvador Dalí was a case in point. The originality with which he opposed conventional images in his work and lifestyle, seeking instead to create a synthetic artist ideal of a bizarre marriage of art and life, is a challenge for an artist who is eye-witness to the end of the modernist project and who begins to look back on and reappraise the resulting contradictions. In addition, the art of Oehlen's generation focuses very consciously on popular culture; in this context pop star Dalí is of particular interest, who, as a myth builder, geared the scenarios of art and society to his persona, arbitrarily shifting his systems of reference.

However, this already roots in an advanced understanding of the artist from the 19th century. Late Romanticism at the threshold to "Classical Modernism" gave rise to very different artist figures, who had previously not been as well-known in this form. For the Paris scene of the day, artist figures such as Dalí and the whole Surrealist group went down in history as artist-creators and stylised personalities.



In this field of reference, Karel Teige's collages from the 1960s reconcile the human body with nature and the principle of creation; the body is inscribed into nature and into art history, and ideal forms reappear in creation. Accordingly, we should also see Christian Ludwig Attersee's ironic self-enactments of the 1960s and the desire to free oneself of all conventions. Here – similar to Surrealist Dalí – the artist is his own muse, his body is at once a Greek god and the home of ideal form. We observe not only the metamorphosis of an artist image, but rather also the concomitant mythologisation that does not take itself completely seriously. The artists towards the end of the 19th century were the first to be aware of the artificial nature of their role in society and, by degrees, to begin to play with this role. This late Romantic stance also became a key element of 20th-century idolatry.

This is where Oehlen's reflections come in. Mythology, an old principle of ordering the world of idols, becomes a determinative constant in his work. In Böcklin's work it is very much apparent, albeit in line with the understanding of Heine's "Gods in Exile". In Dalí's work it is already encrypted and distorted, transforming in Oehlen's work into a disparate system of reference that puts modern myths under the scrutiny of the critical eye, as it were. In all of these instances, it is also always the artist figure – regardless of its fragile and questionable status – by which we gauge all the possible myths.

Press conference:	March 3, 2006, 11:00 a.m. Kunsthaus Graz, Space04
Opening:	March 3, 2006, 8:00 p.m. Kunsthaus Graz, Foyer
Curators:	Peter Pakesch, Katrin Bucher
Assistant curator:	Katia Schurl
Duration:	04.03 – 07.05.2006 Tues – Sun 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Thurs 10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Kunsthaus Graz, Space02