DAVID NOLAN NEW YORK

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Jonathan Meese

By Barbara MacAdam

November 17, 2016



Jonathan Meese, *Untitled*, 2009, acrylic, permanent marker, pen, graphite, and cut-and-pasted printed paper on handmade paper, $41\,3/8 \times 31\,1/8$ in, 105×79 cm. Photo: Jan Bauer

Is it cheating, one wonders, to mount an elegantly installed, well-balanced exhibition of wild and wooly, hyper-expressive messy work by painter, sculptor, and performer Jonathan Meese? Such is the dilemma posed by "DR. TRANS-FORM-ERZ," a selection of some seventy works on paper created over twenty years. A self-proclaimed mama's boy with a bad temper, the eccentric German artist, born in Tokyo, was deeply influenced by American popular culture. He shows his love for retro Hollywood with portraits of a John Wayne hero, Zorro, Lolita, Mr. Spock, and other characters. Other drawings give comeuppance to history's villains: Stalin, Caligula, Nero, and of course, Hitler. Not least in this mix is Meese himself, whose drawn and photographed likeness appears in many collages.

These modest-sized works hang at spacious intervals in the main gallery. The measured presentation contrasts markedly with *Fort d'EVOLUTIONSKNOXOZ de ZARDOZEDADADDY 2 (ERZ JOHNNY WAYNE IS DADDY COOLISMEESE)*, a new, site-specific installation that fills the landing on the gallery's staircase. It offers an intensive immersion in Meese's signature style, with collaged walls crammed with images from torn-out magazine pages. There's hardly space for air—just an all-embracing platform for profanity, political symbols, music allusions, and art and literature both high and low.