

# Guide to Happiness: Exhibition by Dietmar Brixy and Matthias Garff

Montag, 28. September 2020 - 18:22 Uhr, by Nicole Sperk

Everywhere in Mannheim and Ludwigshafen there are huge colourful posters with the letters "Happy" in large letters and a question mark behind them. It is the artist Dietmar Brixy who asks this question. In his current exhibition at the Altes Pumpwerk Neckarau, where he lives and works, he answers it with a resounding yes: "Happy" without question mark is the name of his most recent paintings.

Dietmar Brixy does not need a break to think. Of course, he says, you can be happy even in Corona times. When the lockdown came, he admits that he was already feeling a little melancholy. "In the past, when someone told me about a blockade, I always smiled a little, to be honest. And suddenly I had the feeling that I needed a creative break myself. How long did this state last? "14 days, I say. My partner says: four," he says and laughs. Of course, he also knows moods and fears. But when Brixy then looks around the beautifully renovated rooms of the former pumping station near the large power station and the Rhine ferry to Altrip, which has been his home for almost 20 years, he realises: He's done a damn good job.

## Colourful and cheerful

What he then sees are many paintings, created by himself in the past months. Apart from the fact that he could not travel and did not attend any cultural events, the Corona spring was not so spectacularly different from what it would have been otherwise. Shopping, he admits, he doesn't go anyway, and working in the home office was something he was used to before. And he was, once again, extremely productive. "Yes, I wasn't exactly lazy," he calls it himself, a bit of a coquette. The art on the walls, the oil paintings consisting of many layers, on which colours celebrate cheerful celebrations, showing abstract plants or a water surface (without ever being naturalistic) - most of this art will no longer be there in a few weeks. Sold, at quite proud sums. When he celebrates his 60th birthday next year, he will be an established, successful artist.

## Guest from Leipzig

What else does Brixy see? The wall installation "Message in a Box" dominated by the colour blue. And in the kitchen a huge gorilla. He bought it, it is a work by the Leipzig artist Matthias Garff. As every year, Brixy has invited a colleague to his autumn exhibition, mediated by the joint Berlin gallery owner Werner Tammen. Garff's art fits perfectly into the setting of the pumping station, in the almost paradisiacal garden the animal sculptures of the 34-year-old find a temporary home.

## Technique: broom, leather, pot

Like Brixy, he deals with nature, but in a completely different way. His works are mostly created from found objects, from things that are no longer used, to which he gives a new function. The red head of a woodpecker is made of Garff's old studio broom, he also used car tyres for it, a rag, a part of an old lawnmower. And the feet? They are rubber boots filled with concrete. "That gives it stability," says Garff mischievously, and you quickly find that one aha-moment in every sculpture. And can rejoice: over an iron that has been worked in, shoes, the artist's old favourite training jacket. "Technique: wooden shoe, broom, leather, pot, potato hoe" is written on a little sign in the exhibition.

"I walk two kilometres from my flat to my studio," says Garff. "And on the way I find many things." Even crown caps, for example, and other small things he uses to make insects, which he exhibits in boxes. Sustainability? Yes, sure, that's also a thought at work. But above all it is simply practical to be able to work anywhere and at any time and to implement ideas quickly.