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Elke Silvia Krystufek
30 Years - No Overview
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Elke Silvia Krystufek's first solo exhibition at the gallery titled *30 Years – No Overview* comprises mainly new works, while a few pieces draw a line back to the beginning of the artist's career around 30 years ago.

The new works on view display a confrontational attitude that has always been characteristic of Krystufek's work. Directly or indirectly they touch upon current political, (art) historical, or personal topics from an emancipatory point of view. In the large painting *Features* (2019) a man is literally kicking the viewer in the face. He is clad in jeans and black sweater, and wearing a bear mask and a US police cap. In the background, surrounding the contours of a painting, one reads fragments of a morbid poem by Gottfried Benn directly addressing gallery visitors: „can you see on the paintings in the galleries bent backs, grey mouths who move like bodies through the things.....can you see how these people paid for their lives?...". The painting is based on a photo session that Krytufek did at the gallery some months ago with the detective Martin Ulm. They documented each other wearing masks, and a small circular painting – *Unicorn* (2019) – features the detective sporting a horse mask. He has been accompanying Krystufek to various locations over the past couple of years, resulting in several series of photographs and paintings with the artist herself and/or the detective as protagonists: in *Adidas meets Wagner* (2017) we see Ulm's shoes, in the photograph *London National Portrait Gallery* (2018) we follow Krystufek clad in a full Batman costume, and in *Wagner portrait light further away* (2018) she is wearing an office-printed mask of the great architect – a motive also found in the painting *Auratic Wagner* (2017). Masks, wigs, costumes, and veils recur in Krystufek's work, and are related to the theme of women's veiling. Krystufek's confrontations with politics and culture are part of her feminism, and includes her preoccupation with women's possibilities to define for herself how to manifest her own identity in public.

More explicitly political references are found in works like *Not My Government* and *Not My Justice* (both 2019) as well as *Störung der Nachtruhe der Republik?* (2018). The latter features the headline of an essay on the case of Rakhat Aliyev, reading like an Austrian/Kazakhstanian crime story, ripe with money laundering, murder, and political cover-ups. *Not My Justice* includes the cover of Aliyev's book *Tatort Österreich,* but the major part of the canvas is filled by a cow, painted in Krystufek's characteristic loose and colorfull style, while a squeezed can of Red Bull is dangling on a string in front of it. The motive of the cow stems from a painting belonging to the collection of Krystufek's father, who passed away a year ago. The works are dense with current political topics (as a sponsor of cultural events Red Bull ran into controversy after the founder expressed sympathy with Trump and Breitbart a couple of years ago), but also personal, cultural, and art historical references. In general, the works are densely hung, and are punctuated by colour palets used by Krystufek, carrying titles such as *Tuymans, Lassnig,* and *Pettibon* (all 2019).

One of the oldest works by Krystufek in the show – *Vater*, 1991 – is a portrait of her father. It is surrounded by works from the collection of her ancestors: an undated wood cut by Franz Traunfellner, for example, and 3 chalk portraits by an unknown artist

named Kappl from 1957. Portraits play a key role in Krystufek's work, and these by an unknown artist are treated equally to her own work in the exhibition, just like her father and his conception / valuation of art are presented as symbolic figures.

In 1989, while still at art school, Krystufek made the work *If I paint....* Though different in style it expresses an attitude similar to the one transmitted in the first work mentioned in this text: *If I paint some bloody picture do ya think that I work? Open your fuckin' eyes.*