

THORSTEN BRINKMANN

THE GREAT CAPE RINDERHORN

4 FEBRUARY – 15 MAY 2016

German artist Thorsten Brinkmann describes his Rice Gallery installation, *The Great Cape Rinderhorn* as a “decaying palace.” Overwhelming at first glance, this “palace” is full of idiosyncratic and eccentric opulence. The walls are painted in angled swatches of pea green, teal, brown, and deep purple interrupting densely patterned pink wallpaper. Lining these walls are portraits of figures in the kind of regal poses traditionally reserved for richly attired knights and monarchs. Here, however, their bodies and faces are adorned and disguised by common objects (trashcans, lampshades, tattered blankets, and ski gloves) and not the precious materials that normally signify royalty. At the center of the gallery sits a plywood crate with a huge animal horn inexplicably perched atop it. A small opening in the side of the crate allows visitors entry to a hidden “cinema,” where a video shows a hapless king struggling to find the right pose, and a tunnel leads to the palace inhabitant’s secret room.

A self-proclaimed *serialsammler* (“serial collector”), Thorsten Brinkmann keeps whatever catches his eye as he sifts through the broken and discarded items sitting in purgatory on thrift store shelves. Brinkmann incorporates his finds into photographs, which he then combines with the found objects to create his room-sized installations. In his *Portraits of a Serialsammler* series, Brinkmann photographs himself wearing his creative ensembles of fabric-scrap vests, pleated skirts for capes, and trashcan helmets. In keeping with his affinity for concealment and surprise, he never shows his face. The images marry the traditional and absurd as his poses draw from centuries of Western painting conventions of old master portraiture. For example, a reclining figure may bring to mind Titian’s *Venus of Urbino* (1538), but Brinkmann never aims to replicate the exact painting. In another series, *studiobluten* (“studio blossoms”), he arranges the secondhand objects into elegant still lifes that mine painting traditions like Dutch *Vanitas*. Weathered paint cans, chipped vases, a bicycle chain, and miscellaneous bric-a-brac are given a fresh life through playful recombination and reframing.

Many of Brinkmann’s portrait and still life photographs that he has done over the past few years are included in *The Great Cape Rinderhorn*, but the majority of the installation was created from things collected in Houston. During his



residency at Rice University Art Gallery, Brinkmann combed through resale stores and City of Houston’s Reuse Warehouse inventory. He even composed and shot several new still lifes and a portrait photograph at General Supply and Equipment – a thrift shop meets junkyard packed with office chairs, desks, filing cabinets, medical supplies, and an overwhelming amount of in-between, including the mammoth horn that became the installation’s centerpiece. To Brinkmann, these places are like gold mines, where what he discovers inspires his art:

One way to experience art is to stand in front of it. You can walk around a sculpture, but you are mostly using your eyes. In an installation, you really use your whole body and all your senses. In this installation, you can even bend down and crawl. There are old objects and materials, so there’s a certain smell. You can touch things. You are completely surrounded in an atmosphere and you become part of it.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Thorsten Brinkmann was born in Herne, Germany in 1971. He studied Visual Communication at Kunsthochschule Kassel and Fine Arts at Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Hamburg. Brinkmann is known internationally for his unconventional photographic portraits and still lifes, featured recently in *T: The New York Times Style Magazine* article, "Witty Photos That Play With Centuries-Old Artistic Tradition" (September 2015).

Brinkmann has had solo exhibitions in Belgium, Germany, and Mexico. His work is represented in museums throughout Europe and was included in *Beyond Borders, The Fifth Beaufort Triennial*, Belgium (2015); and *Dress Codes: The Third ICP Triennial of Photography and Video*, International Center for Photography, New York (2009). Following his 2012 residency at The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Brinkmann undertook *La Hütte Royal*, a yearlong installation project of transforming a dilapidated house in the Troy Hill area of Pittsburgh into a permanent artwork.

In 2011, Thorsten Brinkmann received the Finkenwerder Art Prize, "awarded to artists who have made an extraordinary contribution to contemporary art in Germany." He lives and works in Hamburg.

SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP

Rice Gallery exhibitions and programs receive major support from the Rice University Art Gallery Patrons. Additional support comes from Rice Gallery Members, the Robert J. Card, M.D. and Karol Kreymer Catalogue Endowment, and the Leslie and Brad Bucher Artist Residency Endowment. The Gallery receives partial operating support from the City of Houston. KUHF-FM and Saint Arnold Brewing Company provide in-kind contributions.

Rice Gallery thanks City of Houston's Reuse Warehouse and Kenneth Oleni at General Supply and Equipment.

HOURS

Rice Gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 – 5:00, Thursday until 7:00, and Sunday, noon to 5:00.

GALLERY ADMISSION IS FREE.

LOCATION AND PARKING

Rice Gallery is on the ground floor of Sewall Hall and is reached using Campus Entrance 1 located at the intersection of Main Street and Sunset Boulevard. Paid parking (credit card only) is available in the Founder's Court Visitor Lot directly in front of Sewall Hall.

For other parking options visit: rice.edu/parking
By METRORail: Hermann Park/Rice University Station.

Front: *Goldo*, 2016
©Thorsten Brinkmann & VG Bildkunst Bonn, 2016
Courtesy Pablo's Birthday Gallery, New York

Above: Thorsten Brinkmann collecting objects at General Supply and Equipment, Houston, Texas, 2015
Photo: Nash Baker © nashbaker.com