

Walton Ford

Aquarelle

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623 Berlin

18 June – 14 August 2021

Galerie Max Hetzler is pleased to announce *Aquarelle*, a solo exhibition of recent works by **Walton Ford** at Bleibtreustraße 45, Berlin. This is the artist's first solo presentation with the gallery.

Ford is known for his monumental and extremely detailed watercolours depicting wild animals. His works expand upon the visual language and narrative scope of traditional natural history painting. Influenced by historical sources such as the illustrations of John James Audubon (1785-1851), who gained popularity with his life-sized drawings of birds, the artist creates works of a unique luminosity in watercolour, gouache, and ink.

Drawing from a variety of sources, including scientific illustrations, historical events, underground comics, literature, films, and myths, he creates unique, surreal stories with a spark of black humour.

"When I read a story that gives me an idea for a picture," he explains, *"I try to bring elements to the painting that are not contained in the text, so there's a visual dimension to it you could never find elsewhere."*

Ford's masterfully precise way of working presents minutely detailed renderings of individual species and their behavioural patterns, and foregrounds the cultural-historical encounter between animals and humans as well.

Many of the works on view at Galerie Max Hetzler powerfully reflect on bizarre and often violent encounters between humans and wildlife, and their consequences. Although animals such as monkeys, felines, wolves, bears, and birds are undoubtedly the main protagonists in the artist's works, and human figures rarely appear, their presence is always implied.

In the work *Suicide Clutch* (2021), a motorcycle has been attacked by a large, snarling cheetah, suggesting a near-fatal encounter between man and beast. In *The Flaming Fields* (2020), Mount Vesuvius dramatically spits clouds of fire and ash in the background, illuminating the night sky, whilst Sir William Hamilton's pet monkey climbs a classical marble sculpture on the overlooking balcony. Relics of human achievement, such as a magnifying glass, telescope, and a notebook, are arranged in a manner reminiscent of a vanitas still life. In *Detested* (2020), Ford portrays a mandrill in a tug-of-war with Oskar Kokoshka (1886-1980) and the artist's painting of the primate, commenting on the grandiose egotism of artists. Other works such as *Threnos* (2020) and *MORGUNDÖGG* (2020) draw strongly from ancient mythology, reflecting on man's history with—and deepest instincts towards—animals, with attitudes alternating between fear and awe.



Walton Ford, *Detested*, 2020,
152.4 x 212 cm.; 60 x 83 1/2 in.
Photo: Tom Powel Imaging

In this way, Ford creates an exotic cosmos of spectacular man-made stories. In dazzling colours, his works reveal a fragile alliance between civilisation and wilderness, beauty and brutality.

Walton Ford (*1960) lives and works in New York. Solo exhibitions of his work have been held in international institutions, such as Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris (2015); Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; Albertina, Vienna; and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek (2010–2011); Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio; and Brooklyn Museum, New York (2006–2007). Ford's work is in the collections of the Albertina Museum, Vienna; Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain; Princeton Art Museum, Princeton; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

Further exhibitions and events:

until 14 August 2021

Albert Oehlen

unverständliche braune Bilder

Goethestraße 2/3 Berlin,

Bleibtreustraße 15/16 10623 Berlin

15 June – 31 August 2021

André Butzer

Window Gallery, Goethestraße 2/3 Berlin

22 June – 7 August 2021

Tursic & Mille

Strange Days

41 Dover Street, London W1S 4NS

12 June – 7 August 2021

Ai Weiwei

Marbre, Porcelaine, Lego

57, rue de Temple 75004 Paris

Press contact:

Galerie Max Hetzler
Honor Westmacott
honor@maxhetzler.com
Berlin: +49 30 346 497 85-0

www.facebook.com/galeriemaxhetzler
www.instagram.com/galeriemaxhetzler
www.twitter.com/hetzlergallery