

It is a pleasure for Galleri Nicolai Wallner to present *The Critic*, a new installation by Elmgreen & Dragset.

Elmgreen & Dragset's *The Critic* is a bronze cast of a vulture, a scavenging bird that feeds on the carcasses of other animals. The vulture shown at Galleri Nicolai Wallner is perched on a tree branch, with a prominent beak and folded wings, and peers down at the darkened room, ready to strike at any moment. Installed in a black cube which contrasts the artist's interest in the white cube, the vulture is lit up by a single beam of light. This gives the installation an almost theatrical character and the viewer becomes part of a Brecht-like performance.

Similar to the severe world of nature in which the vulture determines the final fate of other animals, *The Critic* questions the role of the art and the artist today. Thus the question arises, who is the vulture in modern society? Who is it that benefits from the misfortune of others and from the chaos and destruction in the world today?

But should the title be taken literally, the vulture is the image of a critic, who lives on what others have created and plays a part in their success or failure. As such Elmgreen & Dragset use the vulture as an ambiguous symbol in their well known thought provoking manner.

*The Critic* is executed in bronze and is as such part of the body of works by the artists made in bronze, most notably *Powerless Structures* Fig. 101 exhibited on the Fourth Plinth in London that depicts a boy on a rocking horse that questions the traditions of celebrating military victory through monuments. By casting this work and *The Critic* in bronze, the artists play on the connotations related to bronze as a medium in art. Through art history, bronze has always been the preferred medium amongst sculptors and is loaded with the prolific value of the sublime. As such, there exists a distinct contrast between the less honorable animal that feeds on the carcasses of other animals and the prestigious and elevated material it has been immortalized in.

The vulture represents the idea that art has a critical potential and that the (art) world needs artists who assume the role of the critic on matters of modern society and contemporary life and thus the critic takes on the role as the critic of the art.

Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset, who live and work in Berlin and London, have been collaborating since 1995. They have exhibited extensively worldwide, including Serpentine Gallery and Tate Modern in London, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, ZKM Museum of Modern Art in Karlsruhe, The Power Plant in Toronto, MUSAC in Léon, and Kunsthalle Zürich.

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