

## OVERVIEW

After his training as a wood sculptor at the Städtische Berufsfachschule für das Holzbildhauerhandwerk in Munich, Daniele Dell'Eva decided to study fine arts at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Karlsruhe.

The artist, who was born in 1989, was a student of Professor Stephan Balkenhol from 2013 until his diploma and master's degree in 2019.

While sculpture was once his primary domain, Dell'Eva now also feels at home in painting with oil pastels and airbrushes. He transfers his knowledge of sculpture to his canvases, on which hand-sized or large-format bodies and figures become apparent: Sceneries that at first glance seem sinister are given a lightness and tenderness by luminous accents and delicate details.

Dell'Eva lives and works in Würzburg.

## WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD WOLF? NOBODY!

### ON WORKS OF THE ARTIST DANIELE DELL'EVA

The night: the ambivalent experience between the frightening unknowing and the mysterious experience of nature. Or the time of the sensual „potentiation of the unconscious“, as one would have said in the natural philosophy of Romanticism. In that period, the day was seen as a time belonging to the external senses and the night as one that evokes another, new world in the human being: the inner night world in which true reality is revealed.

The motif of the night and its revelations is omnipresent in Dell'Eva's paintings. Thus the night sky expands in deep blue to black colour transitions across the horizons, long shadows stretch over the floor. Attentive eyes discover a crescent moon in each painting, always watching over the scenery.

Dell'Eva himself says that the night is the time when „peace and danger lie close together“, that we „perceive objects, animals and people differently“ and that at the same time „beautiful things can suddenly seem threatening“.

Indeed: paintings such as „Vampirskulptur umarmt Todskulptur zärtlich, aber auch irgendwie einnehmend“ („Vampire sculpture embraces death sculpture tenderly, but also somehow capturing“) or „Wolf und Geisterhund“ („Wolf and ghost dog“) primarily emit uncanniness and threat. They confirm every humans' primal fear of darkness. That darkness which, given the poor eyesight of the human eye at night, is able to fuel one's imagination with eerie images, making us sprint up the stairs of our basement after turning off the lights.

In Dell'Eva's paintings, black creatures stand watching from a distance between trees, wolves lurk between bushes with bared teeth and flashing eyes, while another wolf takes a bath between bare tiled walls. And as if those depicted scenes weren't food enough for eerie fantasies, a reaper stands on the windowsill in the moonlight.

Dell'Eva did not only find his way to sculpture and to painting through his liberal arts studies in Karlsruhe. In fact, his artistic career already began earlier with a training as a wood sculptor in Munich, and it runs through his paintings. His works are always figural, depicting busts and pedestals. The titles of his paintings, which always speak of „sculptures“ rather than „persons“ or „figures“, also reveal the wood sculptor's professional roots. In terms of content, Dell'Eva does not shy away from addressing topics in his sculptures, which then become paintings, that many others would avoid: death, abyss, loneliness.

And yet! the stories that Dell'Eva's paintings tell are not ones of fear and sadness. Instead, a parallel world full of tenderness reveals itself in the darkness of his paintings.

The artist works with paradoxes: luminous, climbing blossoms bear witness to the beauty of nature that would otherwise remain hidden from us in daylight. What is visible during the day is set in the darkness of the night and, contrary to a supposed reality, becomes a surrealistic dream scene. The partial blurriness of the pictures, which is due to the painting technique with an airbrush gun, underlines the fairytale-like and enchanted nature of the sceneries.

The figures depicted, which serve as vehicles for those supposedly sinister symbolisms, do not appear frightening. Quite the opposite: they radiate a humorous lightness and non-chalance. If you look closely, you will see that the scary wolf, who takes a bath at night, lies in the bathtub in trainers and a T-shirt. Two small figures dance a pair dance in the moonlight between stone walls – „A romantic song is playing,“ the artist adds. All of a sudden, the ever-present crescent moon peeks out more playfully between two trees or through a window. And even the otherwise depressing subject of death is humorously disarmed by the artist with a dry, two-syllable statement about the painting: „Hello.“

Dell'Eva manages to disarm heavy, charged subjects with sensitivity - without depriving them of profundity. Through the duality of his motifs and titling, he links familiar symbolism with new emotions. Who would have thought that one would also want to be embraced by an oversized vampire figure?

Daniele Dell'Eva's works leave one with a comforting feeling of youthful lightness, to which one gratefully surrenders when faced with darkness: If you look closely, everything is actually half as bad.

Text by Emma-Lilo Keller (2022)

